

Week ending March 29 1958

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JOHN BULL

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CHANCERY 3344 MARCH 29, 1958 VOLUME 103 NUMBER 2700

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REPORT FROM THE EDITOR



Patrick Ryan: a tsarina's treasures gave him an idea

PATRICK RYAN is fascinated by the exquisite Fabergé Easter eggs which he describes in his story *Firebird* (on page 7), and has made a study of them. "They were scattered by the Russian revolution," he says, "but there are several in Britain—the Queen has some and a firm of London jewellers owns four. I believe that most of the other fabulous pieces made for the nobility by Fabergé have also been accounted for. But there is one mystery which has never been solved—the whereabouts of a Noah's Ark complete with animals, which I hope will give me the plot for another story. . . ."

Ryan has been a G.P.O. official at Leeds for the past three years. He is forty-one and was born in the Isle of

Wight of Liverpool-Irish stock.

He began writing as a hobby five years ago and is now working on a TV play and his first novel. "I try to write for at least an hour and a half every evening," he says, "and would probably produce more if I could persuade my eight-year-old daughter, Sara, that the typewriter carriage works better by itself."

Like the dictator in his story—and the Tsar himself—Ryan is planning an Easter gift for his wife. "It will be very little compared with a Fabergé egg," he says, "but after all I wrote in *Firebird* the least I can do is buy her a new spring outfit. . . ."

YOUNG John Christopher, a pupil at Peter Symonds School, Winchester, in Hampshire, was very keen to become a scientist. But whenever his name came up before the science staff, heads were shaken dubiously. For one thing, his writing was always difficult to read. And so young John Christopher was removed from the laboratory and set to learning Greek.

Years later, however, it was his scientific bent that put Christopher on the path to success. His science-fiction stories became so popular in America that they were published in book form. Later on the Rockefeller Foundation gave him its £300 Atlantic Award for promising writers.

"Then the market was suddenly swamped with science-fiction short stories, so I switched to books," says Christopher. His novels were also successful, and he gave up his job as manager of a London industrial information bureau to become a full-time writer. His latest novel, *The Caves Of Night*, begins on page 18.

This year he intends to take his family—Joyce, his wife, Nicholas (six), Rosemary (four), Clare (two) and Sheila (six months)—to live on the Continent for a year or two. "I hope to travel up to Finland to find material for a story with a desolate background."

The Buds and the Bees No. 2

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think the Stalk
brought them.

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Free Speech

- Now men do the family shopping
- The worst paid workers in Britain
- The man who likes Monday morning

As a bachelor working in an office full of married men, I am shocked by their diminished status. They seem to be less breadwinners than bread buyers.

Instead of going for a lunchtime stroll, or for a breath of fresh air, they're chasing from shop to shop, and standing in queues. Daily travel on buses and tubes is made more hazardous during rush hours by men loaded with parcels where they used to carry only umbrellas and newspapers.

And intelligent conversation, already hard-pressed by television, is being finished off by—literally—"shop" talk. Politics and sport are no longer the principal interests of men; the important topics are food prices, wallpaper patterns and the wearing qualities of curtain materials. —J. RICHARDSON, Chelsea, S.W.3.

First Things First

The social arts should be taught to adolescents at school, says Mrs. R. D. ("Free Speech," December 28), in place of maths, medieval history and other subjects. We've tried it in America, and many serious-minded Americans are becoming increasingly alarmed at the results.

The primary purpose of education is not merely that youth should be at ease in places of entertainment. A college student here recently stated in



the press that he was given lectures for almost a week on how to write a cheque.

Surely the time would have been better spent learning something which would help him to earn the money first. One has ample time in later life to acquire the mechanics of spending it. —MARGARET PRASNIENSKA, Shrine Place, Los Angeles, 7, U.S.A.

Front Line Feast

Each time I read "A Meal To Remember," I find myself wondering whether any of the meals described were so thoroughly enjoyed as my self-cooked meal in the trenches before Pozieres in 1916. On that day we were issued with half a loaf of bread instead of two slices.

I scrounged an onion from a field kitchen, and lit a fire made from candle stubs bound with strips torn from sandbags. Then I shredded the onion as fine as possible and fried it in boot dubbin.

Into this mixture I put quantities of cheese, stirring and stirring until I could wait no longer.

It wasn't properly cooked, but by gum—and gum is the right word—it was absolutely delicious. —H. W. JONES, Princes Road, Dartford, Kent.

Banging Doors

Is it possible for cars to be made so that the doors don't need slamming? Night after night people in bed are driven mad by the constant slamming as motorists arrive and depart. —MRS. A. KENNETT, Newton Road, Wealdstone, Middlesex.

"Car doors are sealed with rubber

to exclude damp and draughts," says a car manufacturer. "That makes the doors more difficult to close because the car is airtight."

Open To All

In the town of Altenberg, in the German Rhineland, there is a beautiful cathedral which, I was told, is used by both Catholics and Protestants. Apparently the system works very well, and I think that more churches like this would bring about the much-needed unity between the different parts of the Christian church. —PETER J. CLARKE, Park Road, Chigwell, Notts.

"The Catholic Cathedral at Altenberg, which was badly decayed, was rebuilt between 1835 and 1847 by order of King Frederick William IV of Prussia," says an authority on German churches. "He stipulated that because the state was a Protestant one, the cathedral should be used for worship by both denominations."

Skilled Eye

Some friends of mine in the country have a stall in the local market. Once, visiting them, I went along on market day, and took over the stall while they went for a cup of tea.

A woman approached, looked into one of my baskets of eggs, and said: "I'll take a dozen that have been laid by black hens."

Not wishing to show my ignorance, for I did not know which had been laid by black hens, I said, "Certainly. Pick your own if you can tell the difference."

Having selected her dozen, she gave me the money, but I couldn't resist commenting, "It looks as though black hens lay the biggest eggs."

"Aye," she said as she turned away. "That's how you tell 'em." —C. M., Southwick, Sussex.

Worth Of Words

After reading Harry Hopkins's article "Do You Get A Fair Wage?" (JOHN BULL, February 22) I should like to put in a word for the people who seem to work harder and earn less than almost any other section of the community.

An author must serve a gruelling apprenticeship, working long solitary hours at his craft of words, before he can hope to achieve publication standard. Yet a book which takes a year to write may, when published, bring

in as little as from £50 to £150. According to statistics collected from their members by the Society of Authors two or three years ago, forty per cent earn less than £250 gross per year; eighteen per cent earn between £250 and £500; and only fifteen per cent between £500 and £1,000 in a working year. —MARGARET WILLY, Reigate, Surrey.

Welcome Monday

The other day I met a former colleague who retired a few months ago after forty-six years of business life, and I asked him what he liked most about his new life.

He didn't hesitate. "That's easy—Sunday evening. Being retired has completely altered my Sunday evenings. When I was at work, my Sunday was always clouded over with a



feeling of uneasiness and vague apprehension because I knew Monday morning was approaching slowly but surely.

"Now it is quite different. I love Monday mornings at home so much that I spend Sunday evening in a state of pleasurable anticipation." —R. B., Birkenhead, Cheshire.

Drop o' Scald

If your reader M. C. G. of Oldham ("Free Speech," February 22) wants to drink a really good cup of tea, she should get an ordinary pint pot.

Put the tea in the pot. Pour the boiling water on it, and cover with a saucer for three or four minutes to allow for brewing, and you will have what my mother used to call a "nice drop of scald."

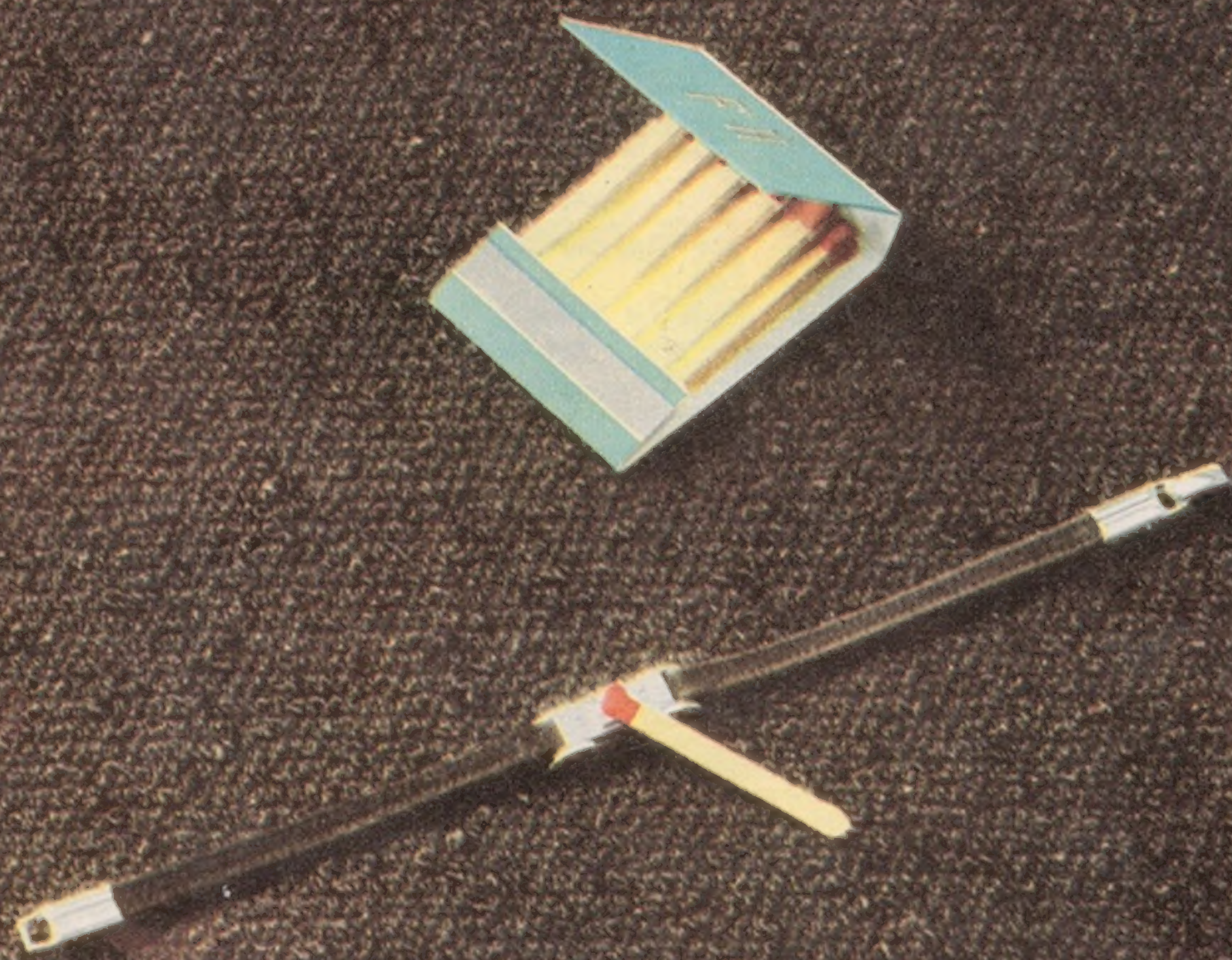
Like many another Northerner I despise the teapot. It kills good tea. —J. HEALEY, Roman Way, St. Budeaux, Plymouth, Devon.

John Bull pays one guinea for each letter published in "Free Speech," and at the usual rates for photographs. Readers with problems (other than medical) should write to the John Bull Free Advice Service, whose experts answer questions by post

THE COVER

SUDDENLY it's spring! And in the spring a young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of slicking up the old tourer. Passing No. 32, however, a couple of eligible spinsters have anticipated the clash of the cleaning and the courting seasons and are trying to focus attention on a different kind of bonnet. Will they succeed? Artist Critchlow's verdict: Of course! For an old car may be a good friend, but an old car and a new girl—that's a perfect partnership. So jump in, girls, never mind the cramped accommodation, it's the mad season—it's spring!





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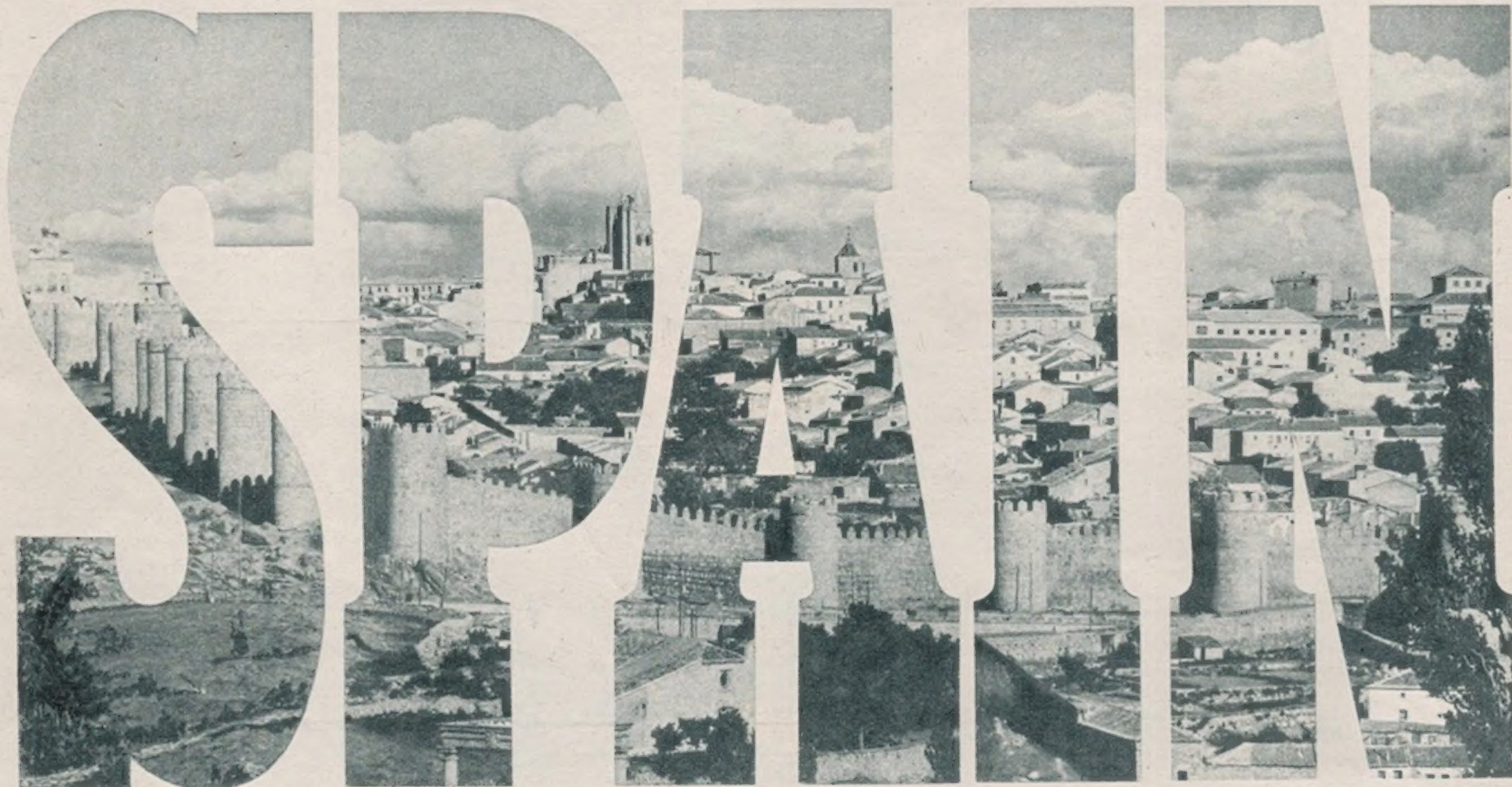
● IN GENEVA, as in all seven of the watch-making cantons of Switzerland, the traditions started almost four centuries ago are inspiring the watch wonders of today. *Time is the Art of the Swiss.*

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This year .. next year .. sometime .. ever



FOR YOUR HOLIDAY THIS YEAR

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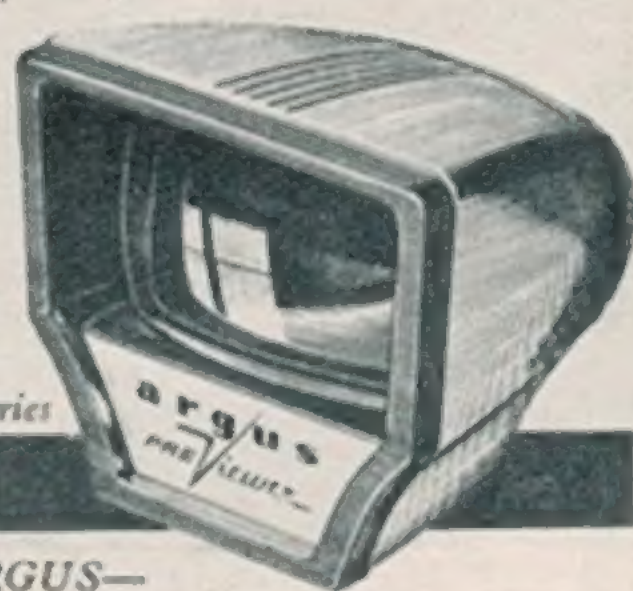
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FIREBIRD

by PATRICK RYAN

From ice and
flame, crystal
and gold she rose . . .
half-bird, half-woman
. . . this bride of the sky!

TORMO was one of the best dictators we ever had. He had almost everything needed for the job. He was brave and ruthless, brutal and flamboyant, and he had a laugh like thunder and a voice like the organ in Burgos Cathedral.

Women littered Tormo's life before he met Marie. She was a fan-dancer who came to Carao with an American vaudeville show. They first met one night when she was taking a meal after the last performance.

Tormo was a colonel in the army then and he came into the restaurant with his two *aides*, Delos and the Negro, Monk. They began drinking and singing the old songs of the revolution and everybody but Marie left rapidly. She carefully drained her glass, pushed the raven hair back from her eyes and shouted: "Shut up!"

The singers were surprised to silence. Tormo inspected her gravely. "What did you say?"

"I said shut up."

Tormo got to his feet. "You're the dancer from the Alcazar. The one that takes her clothes off. We're celebrating and we'd like you to dance for us—"

"Go to hell!"

He leaned across her table and reached for the straps of her dress. Fast as a snake, she smashed the cognac glass and jabbed it up into his face.

"You touch me and I'll take your eyes out."

There was a thin curving slash on Tormo's cheek; it was not deep, but the blood flowed down to his mouth. He licked it and watched Marie

Marie looked up from the magazine. "Now this," she said cunningly, "is what I call a wonderful idea"

ILLUSTRATED
BY ZELINSKI

reflectively. All his women had been easy before. This was new, this tiger-cat.

He laughed and came on again. She slashed at him. He swayed to one side, caught her in his arms and held her helpless against him.

"I'll kill you, you lousy. . . ."

"What are you so mad about?" he asked playfully. "Why don't you want to dance? Why don't you like our singing?"

"You're such rotten singers. And you're spoiling my birthday. It's bad enough having a birthday in this place. . . ."

"Your birthday? . . . It's my birthday, too. That's why we're celebrating." Tormo turned to his friends. "It's her birthday, boys, and look what she gave me for a present." He ran his finger down the cut on his face. "Look, now," he went on, turning back to Marie, "we ought to celebrate together. We're the same, you and me. So let's make it a night. . . ."

Marie began to laugh and they all sat down at her table and went at the cognac. They sang and she danced for them and at the end she went up the hill to Tormo's house. She never returned to the show. . . .

At about the same time as the glass split Tormo's cheek, a paddle steamer from Ecuador churned into Carao harbour. A white-haired old man stood on the deck and looked out at the moonlit town.

"Easter day tomorrow, and another land. It's not Paris, nor is it Vienna, Otto, but it's an old place and we'll just have to see what we can do. The Spanish were here a long time and maybe the people like beautiful things. . . ."

Otto, the small man beside him, grinned but said nothing. Otto was a mute. The gangplank was down and they moved towards it, Otto almost hidden under boxes and packs. Slung across his shoulders was a long copper nameplate: *Fedor Valens, master-jeweller, late of The House of Fabergé, St. Petersburg and Moscow. . . .*

TORMO and Marie made a great team. She was half-Irish, half-Spanish, out of the slums, bred to fight for everything she'd ever had. She took a look around the country and saw that all the clever men in power were cowards, and that all the brave men were stupid. She was clever and Tormo was brave—so they had a clear advantage.

She recognized that Tormo and his army friends held the key to power. Their only rivals were the navy and the mob. So she set her man to cultivate the sailors, the unions and the students. Then, two years later, she pulled the switch and, after three days of riot and bloodshed, Tormo was president at the head of a military junta.

His first decree was to give a month's pay to every worker. Then Marie launched the first of her appeals—for donations from big business to repair the riot damage. Some firms didn't pay up that first time. Then they found they couldn't get licences, the fire people condemned their buildings, the inspectors declared their machines unsafe, the unions called a go-slow . . . so for every succeeding appeal they paid up smartly. And there were a couple of appeals every year; for earthquakes, for orphans, and for Marie's Easter present.

And while Tormo was climbing to power, Valens and Otto were prospering, too. They were wonderful craftsmen and they made jewellery of delicate and elegant design, strange and new to a people accustomed to the florid silverwork of mixed Indian and Spanish traditions.

Their wares became a fashion of the rich and the little shop near the harbour flourished with the years. In his green velvet jacket and white cravat, every silver hair in magnificent place, Fedor became quite a figure in the Harbour Bar—and something of a bore.

"Alas, my dear Penda," he would complain to his friend, the chemist. "There are no craftsmen today. Now in the old days, Penda, when I was apprenticed in the workrooms of Fabergé in Morskaya Street, under the great Perchin and Henrik Wigstrom, it was all so different. . . . Here, he would go into a dream. . . . Time

was nothing, money was nothing, perfection was all. For the Tsar or the nobility, *Maitre Carl* would choose the materials himself and superintend the making. And how he made us work! Fifteen months Stein worked on the miniature of the imperial coach which was the surprise present in the Coronation Easter Egg . . . fifteen months, sixteen hours a day sometimes. Today, there's no one fit to make a spoke for one of the wheels."

And about here, Penda or whoever else the old man had gripped, would slip quietly away and leave him to his memories. . . .

Seven times his enemies tried to kill Tormo, but each time he was too tough or too smart for them. Twice he killed the would-be assassin with his own hands, and once Marie shot him.

The big spot of each passing year was the Easter *fiesta*, which they fixed according to their joint birthday. They were both sentimental about this anniversary and Tormo always bought Marie a lavish and ostentatious present—financed by an appeal, of course.

Once it was a gold-plated Cadillac with built-in cocktail bar and beauty parlour; then there was



Tormo grasped the old man by his lapels. "Listen," he roared. "If you want to live, you do as I say"

the set of mutation minks, one for each day of the week; the Roman bathroom with mirror walls, jet fittings and mother-of-pearl *bidet*; the marble fountain for her boudoir, spouting French perfume; the private theatre, hung with her pictures, all neon and glitter-glass . . . always expensive and splendidly vulgar.

But that was the way Marie liked her presents, and anyway she always took good care to plant the idea of the desired present in Tormo's mind.

One day, in their ninth year, she was lying on a divan reading an American magazine. Tormo was having his photograph taken in a new uniform.

"Now this," she said cunningly, "is what I call a wonderful idea."

"What is?" grunted Tormo.

"In this article here. . . . Every Easter for thirty-three years the Tsar of Russia used to have a special Imperial Easter Egg made for the Tsarina."

"What were these eggs made of? Diamond-studded chocolate?"

"In a way. They were really jewel-eggs, made of gold and diamonds and rubies and pearls and everything precious by the Imperial Court Jeweller, Carl Fabergé. Look at that one." She held out the book to him. "The Orange Tree Egg; rough gold trunk, jade leaves, gems all over

it for flowers, and when you press a button a golden nightingale comes out and sings. . . . Or that one, the Peacock Egg. A crystal egg with a peacock in a tree inside. And when you take it out, the bird struts about and spreads its wonderful blue and gold tail."

Tormo looked at the pictures. He'd been wondering what to get her this year. He took the magazine from her. "Does it say where this firm of what's-a-name—this Fabergé—is now?"

"They're not. The revolution finished them. And anyway nobody can afford to have things like that made now." A note of envy came into Marie's voice. "It says here that the Queen of England has the best collection of Fabergé stuff these days."

"So what? You're as good as any queen," Tormo said. And he strode out, still clutching the magazine, the photographer pleading in his wake. Marie lay back and chuckled to herself.

It was not long before Valens was summoned to the presence. Tormo pushed the open magazine across the desk towards the old man. "Is it true you worked for this Fabergé?"

Fedor traced a loving finger over the picture of the Peacock Egg. "It is true, Excellency. I was apprenticed to him in St. Petersburg when I was eleven. I worked for him for twenty-seven years . . . till the end."

"All right," grunted Tormo. "Could you make an egg like that? Not a copy of that one. A new design of your own just as good."

Fedor smiled. "Yes, Excellency. I could try. I am not a Fabergé or a Wigstrom, but I am their craftsman. But the materials? In those days they were rare and precious. Today, they will cost the earth. . . ."

"Forget the cost. It's an Easter present for Marie—for Her Excellency. You just list what you want and Delos will see you get it. There'll be plenty who'll be honoured to subscribe. And if she likes this one, we're going to have one every year. Just like the Tsar of all the Russias. I'm as good as any tsar. Better, in fact, I'm alive. . . . When can I see the designs?"

"Tomorrow, Excellency."

"Tomorrow? I want your best. Not something you can toss off like that."

"The designs I will bring you took two years to produce. I finished them for *Maitre Carl* in nineteen-fifteen. During the war no jewel-eggs were made and these drawings were to be for the first Easter after the war had been won. Then in nineteen-seventeen. . . ." Fedor spread his hands and dropped them, broken, to his sides. "I brought them out of Russia and have carried them with me ever since. Through all the years, half across the world, the idea has been waiting for creation, waiting for this moment."

SUDDENLY the truth of it all hit the old man and tears came into his eyes. "Forgive me, Excellency—but to make another such piece before I die . . . after all the sorrow and the wandering, all the cheap, the tawdry and the worthless things, to fashion it as *Maitre Carl* intended, to make at last the Firebird. . . ." He was overcome and leaned on the desk for support.

"Now, come on, old one. You don't have to get upset. Sit down and tell me about this Firebird."

"My apologies, Excellency. . . . The design for the egg was based on Stravinsky's *Firebird*, a favourite ballet of the Tsarina and of *Maitre Carl*. You will know the story. . . ."

"Who? Me? Ballet!" Tormo laughed at himself. "Tell me about it. Who's this Stravinsky?"

And so Fedor told him the story of the Firebird, the tree of golden apples, the prince and the princess and their triumph over Kóstchei the evil one, the magic feather, and how the great ballerina Karsavina had flashed like a gold flame before the blue darkness of the forest. . . .

After that day Fedor dropped everything else, and with Otto and his two assistants worked only on the Firebird. Delos produced all he asked

and he laboured happily and tirelessly all day and far into the night.

"It's like a dream come true, Otto. To work again as we did so long ago, to a design fit for the Tsar of all the Russias, to use only the finest, to forget for once the cost and make something unique in its beauty, exquisite in its taste. If I die the day after it is finished, I shall not complain."

FOUR months later the Firebird was almost finished. It was truly lovely, splendid as the Peacock, elegant as the Coronation, but with a strange enchantment all its own.

From a bowl of nephrite set upon frail arabesques of yellow gold, a plume of flames leaped upwards, bursting from a glow of Siam rubies, flickering tongues of *guilloché* enamel ablaze with all the colours of the fire, sinewed with strands of red gold, writhing in curves of yellow and orange and rose topaz, sweeping aloft to poise at their fiery tips the crystal egg.

The shell was purest rock-crystal, thin as frost, bright as dawn, the two halves rimmed in platinum, alight with tiny brilliant diamonds. Within the crystal rose the tree of golden apples, the trunk of hammered gold, the leaves of jade, the fruit gleaming against the darkness of the foliage.

Before the tree, winging up from the flames below the crystal, rose the Firebird; half-bird, half-woman, born of the flames, bride of the sky, carved in opal and aventurine, veiled in tawny flames, soaring on cobweb wings of fire, of amethyst frail as smoke, of red-gold filigree fine as hair, and drifting petals of azalea enamel.

"Mother of life!" said Tormo. "But that's real beautiful. You've done a great job, old one. It's even better than those your boss made for the tsar."

Fedor smiled contentedly. He had made his masterpiece and he was sublimely happy.

"There is something else, Excellency; a little surprise."

He touched a cabochon ruby in the base. There was the faintest of sighs and life came to the Firebird. The ice and fire, the crystal and gold, the jewels and the enamels, all the precious surfaces trembled minutely in the oblique light, the shadows moving, the colours changing, and the Firebird, sparkling and glistening, seemed to be hovering on vibrant wings above the licking of the flame.

Tormo chuckled in delight and admiration.

"That's a great touch. She'll love that. She'll just love that." He stopped and thought for a moment. "Say, that gives me a great idea, too."

And he described exactly what he wanted Fedor to add to the egg.

As he finished, the old man went as white as a candle and sat down weakly.

"Oh, no, Excellency! It would never do. This, Excellency—this is a piece by Fabergé. The most beautiful thing I have ever made. My life, all my years of working, have been given to this end, to the making of the Firebird. It is unthinkable to add such a thing to it. It would not be in keeping—it would not be in proper taste at all."

Tormo leaned over and pulled Fedor up by his lapels. This was a different Tormo: the tyrant crossed, hard-eyed and brutal.

"Listen, old one. You made this egg for me, not for yourself. So, if you want to live, you do as I say." He flung the old man back against the chair.

Fedor looked up at him. "I could not do it. It would be a wickedness. You may kill me if you like, but I will not do it. I am old. I have made the Firebird. I can die."

"Sure you're old and likely ready to die. But that's no trump." Tormo nodded to Monk, the Negro. "Get his assistant."

Monk twisted Otto's arms up behind his back and drew a knife. Otto mouthed in terror and beseeched Fedor with his eyes.

"You do as I say, old one," said Tormo, "or I give the word. . . ."

Fedor dropped his arms apart in despair. His



"Why, Tormo, you old darling . . ." Marie cried. And she threw her arms about him and kissed him

voice was filled with horror and disgust. "All right. I'll do it. But let him be."

"That's wise. But just to make sure you keep your word, we'll take him. When you deliver the egg the way I want it, you get him back."

And he walked out, Monk dragging Otto after him. . . .

Two days later, the gold-plated Cadillac pulled up outside the shop. Marie, dripping mutation mink, got out with Delos.

"Show me," she said, "the Firebird."

"But, Excellency," said Valens, "it is a surprise. You are not to know."

She smiled. "They're always surprises, every year. But I always check to make sure they're the way I want."

"It's all right," added Delos. "Tormo won't know. Unless you talk."

So Fedor showed them the Firebird egg.

"Geel!" said Marie. "But that's terrific. How much did it cost?"

"How much? . . . I don't really know."

Delos laughed thinly. "Give or take a thousand, the materials cost fifty-seven thousand dollars. Leaving out those that were given free."

"Fifty-seven thousand! It is beautiful. It's the loveliest thing I ever saw in my whole life. And that's a real cute effect. It all shimmers like a heat-haze." Marie watched Fedor with calculating eyes. "However did you make that flame like that? Is it solid? Or hollow?"

The old man was pleased at the interest.

"It is built up on a thin dome of gold, Excellency. It is hollow inside. Let me show you."

"Good," Marie said triumphantly. "Then you won't have any trouble fitting this inside so it won't be seen." She took a small cone-shaped package from her bag. "This is my own special little surprise for Tormo."

"But, Excellency, he will know you have seen the Firebird."

"Leave him to me," she chuckled. "He'll be tickled pink at the surprise, anyway. Let me show you how it works. I had it made in Rio."

When she had finished, Fedor was appalled, his eyes wrinkling in pain, his mouth dropping open in disbelief.

"But not you, too, Your Excellency. You can't be serious. You can't really mean that you want me to fix that—that vulgarity into my Firebird. Say you are joking, Excellency."

"The hell I'm joking. *Your* Firebird! You were hired to make this thing, that's all. And you'll fix it like I say." And she turned and walked out.

"Get some sense, Valens," said Delos. "You can't beat her. She knows they've got Otto up on the hill. When Tormo lets him go, she'll pick

him up if you cross her. Tormo's an angel compared with her. So you're caught both ways."

He left the shop and the old man sat in front of the Firebird and slowly, hopelessly, began to cry.

* * *

The day before Easter, Fedor duly delivered the Firebird at the palace, and Otto was released.

On Easter morning, before the main celebration commenced, Tormo presented it to Marie, flinging open dramatically the door of his study to reveal the Firebird egg.

"Your Easter present, my dear. Carrying on where the Tsar of all the Russias left off. . . ."

"Oh, but it's beautiful, honey! And you remembered what I said about that magazine? What a lovely idea!" Marie was quite an actress in her way, and she went on in convincing surprise and ecstasy for a full minute, rising to a final crescendo when Tormo moved the ruby switch and the Firebird came to life.

"And now," he said. "I'll show you something else. So far you've seen what the jeweller made. This comes from me, personally to you."

He touched the ruby again. Slowly a narrow panel opened in the base of the flame, sliding silently back to reveal a strip of shining platinum set with a message in tiny rubies and brilliant diamonds. It was like the inscription plate on a football trophy and it read: "*Happy Easter, Marie, and Many Happy Returns.*"

About it a hidden light flashed on and off and it alternately darkened and glittered, like a neon sign over a tiny dance-hall.

Marie, of course, was genuinely surprised. And genuinely delighted.

"But that's just the cutest thing. Many happy returns, too. That just makes it complete, that makes it really mine. And the tricky way it comes on! Why, Tormo, you old darling. . . ." And she threw her arms about him and kissed him. He grinned hugely, beaming at his success.

"Now," she said, when she let him go. "I've got a little surprise for you. But I want you to promise you won't get mad about it. . . ."

And Tormo duly promised.

MARIE pressed another of the cabochon rubies. There was a faint humming and then, while the neon sign flashed on and off, a musical box tinkled and her own voice, thin but clear, came singing out of the Firebird egg.

"Happy birthday to you,
Happy birthday to you,
Happy birthday, dear Tormo,
Happy birthday to you."

Tormo stared in surprise. Then a slow grin of delight spread across his face.

"You mean, you knew I was getting this, and you had that done? Why, you—you. . . ."

"Now you promised not to get mad, didn't you? I had it fixed and plenty of trouble I had doing it. But I didn't know anything about your surprise. I didn't know about that and I think it's just perfect."

There was a click and the musical box tinkled the introduction and the song came on again. Tormo threw back his head and his great laugh flooded out, wildly, happily, and Marie joined in. He picked her up and kissed her.

Then the song stopped, the neon sign went out, and the Firebird egg blew up.

The crystal and the amethyst, the nephrite and the rubies, the diamonds and the topaz, the opal and the gold of four colours, the flame, the tree, the golden apples and the Firebird, the beauty and the wonder, the elegance of Fabergé and the craftsmanship of Valens, all exploded and disintegrated and flew through the air, taking the kissing heads of Tormo and Marie. . . .

Together they had made a great team, made him one of the best dictators we ever had. They had, as I said before, almost everything needed for the job. All but one thing—taste.

THE END

© Patrick Ryan, 1958

It's father who pays when wedding bills announce his daughter's day of glory. The question is . . .

Can you afford a champagne bride?

by ALAN LLOYD

JILL COTTON, the daughter of a wealthy Midlands business man, married David Deyong, a London stockbroker, in Birmingham last year at an estimated cost of £10,000. Three hundred guests who travelled from Euston were given a luxury luncheon, to the music of a famous dance band, on a specially chartered train.

Extravaganzas on this scale account for a minute fraction of the turnover handled by Britain's wedding trade. Of about 400,000 marriages that will occur this year, it is expected that almost three-quarters will be traditional affairs with church gatherings and party receptions, and that the total expenditure on all weddings, including gifts, will top £22 million. At least £100,000 is spent annually on confetti alone.

In 1956 a Kent man told a bankruptcy court in Maidstone that his daughter's wedding had cost him £1,208. He had invited 189 guests, and 245 turned up.

Snags have often increased the bill, seldom diminished it. When June Oaken of Trearddur Bay, North Wales, discovered shortly before she was married in Liverpool that she had left her great-grandmother's silver locket at home, her

parents hired a thirty-two seater Dakota aircraft to fetch it. She had always said that she would be married wearing the locket. She was—at an additional cost of about £150.

The bulk of a wedding bill is met by the bride's father. Conventionally he pays for the newspaper announcement (up to a guinea a line), printing the invitations (£3 5s. a hundred), the bride's trousseau (ready-made gown from ten to forty guineas, veil from 10s. to £5, gloves and bag £5, shoes £3 10s., and going-away suit probably slightly less than the wedding dress), the bridesmaids' dresses, and probably a new outfit for the bride's mother.

According to the wedding service directions in the book of Common Prayer, "the Man shall give unto the Woman a Ring, laying the same upon the Book with the accustomed duty to the Priest and Clerk. . . ." Church expenses, now commonly settled in the vestry after the ceremony, are unlikely to total less than £5.

The bride's father pays for the music; the groom pays the clergyman and tips the vergers.

At a fashionable London church expenses are much higher. A wedding with a small choir at St. Martin-in-the-Fields works out at about twenty guineas; at St. Michael's, Chester Square, about thirteen guineas, and at St. Saviour's, Walton Street, Chelsea, twenty-one guineas.

A leading catering firm says that it can put on a buffet reception with savoury snacks and champagne for £1 a head. This price includes the provision of table linen, silver and service. A single-tier cake can be bought for £4, and a three-tier one for thirty-five guineas.

The largest single item of expenditure at most weddings is alcohol. If champagne is the only drink, a bottle will probably be consumed for every three people, and a reception attended by a hundred guests will cost from about £40 for drinks, according to the quality of the champagne.

Flowers for the church are a major expense. Mrs. Robin Slee, who runs a "brides' service," says that bills of up to £20 have been halved by

clients sharing decorations with the previous or following wedding party of the day.

The groom pays for the wedding ring (£4 is the average price), provides the bouquets, buys presents for the bridesmaids, and usually rents his morning suit (£2 12s. 6d. with waistcoat and hat). Although fewer women are married in hired clothes, several hundred will rent gowns, veils and slippers this April, at an inclusive price between five and fifteen guineas.

Millions of pounds are spent every year on wedding presents. Baron Von Thyssen, the Swiss millionaire, gave the former model Nina Dyer an island in the Caribbean and a black panther when they married. Porfirio Rubirosa, the international playboy, took his fifth wife, Odile Rodin, to live in a Paris mansion which was given to him as a wedding present by his third wife, Doris Duke, an American millionairess.

Even industry can be involved in expense by weddings. When the manager of a factory in Lanarkshire told employees that nobody could have time off to get married, seventy workers went on strike. After meeting union officials he lifted the ban. Six girls in the factory had weddings arranged.

One of the luckiest brides-to-be in recent years was a Miss Elizabeth Wilkie who picked up a roll of bank notes worth £5,540 in an Inverness street a few days before her wedding. When the owner heard that she was to marry he contributed a reward of £300 towards the marriage.

For most couples it is a case of deciding where to economize. A Buckinghamshire farmer took his wedding party from church to the reception by tractor and trailer. The hire of two wedding cars costs between £4 and £6.

A Sidcup girl was more austere. Margaret Beck cycled to her wedding wearing a windcheater, corduroy slacks and cycle clips. The groom, a policeman, also arrived by cycle. At the reception, held on the pavement outside the register office, friends drank a toast to the happy couple in milk and ate cheese cakes.

If a wedding is not made a social occasion, it is possible to reduce the expense to about 25s. in church and to 14s. 3d. in a register office—plus the cost of the ring. A woman in Askrigg, Yorkshire, made her own wedding ring. THE END



Racing driver Stirling Moss and his Canadian bride had a cake with five tiers at their fashionable London wedding



London policeman Arthur Cook and his wife held their reception on the pavement. They wore cycling clothes. Toasts were in milk

by ROBERT HOLLES

*Drunks and bad-tempered
drivers, burglars and
naughty boys.... They're
all part of the day's
hobby for our*



A "special" on duty at London's Mansion House for an R.A.F. parade. One constable in the City of London force is an ex-brigadier; one of the sergeants is a peer

Spare-time policemen

A SMALL private car equipped with police radio and manned by three members of the City of London Special Constabulary cruised through home-going traffic in Aldersgate Street at 6.30 on a summer evening.

Through the noise of traffic, Sergeant John How, in charge of the patrol, heard the faint shrilling of an alarm bell. The driver pulled in to the kerb and the three policemen scrambled on to the pavement.

The alarm was sounding from above the entrance to a large office block, where, farther along the building, a caretaker was locking up. How stationed a constable outside the building and accompanied the caretaker inside. "We had a quick look around," he says, "but found nobody." He then turned his attention to the alarm and found that it was connected to a stud on a swing door. The bell was set to ring if the door opened enough to admit an intruder. "On this occasion," he says, "the circuit was faulty and the alarm had been set off by a slight vibration."

Sergeant How, big and intrinsically merry, attributes his quick solution of the case to his experience, in civilian life, as an insurance inspector: "I was on familiar ground. I once took a course on burglar alarms."

Special police function in all parts of Britain as unpaid auxiliaries of the regular police forces, and carry the same authority and responsibility as their professional colleagues. They are employed extensively as foot and mobile patrols, on traffic and crowd control on big public occasions, and are called out during strikes and national emergencies.

There are about 53,000 special policemen and nearly one thousand special policewomen in England and Wales, where the establishments of regular police forces are seven thousand below strength. In recent years recruiting figures have declined. The Metropolitan Police Special Constabulary has a strength of three thousand against a target of ten thousand. Membership of the City of London Special Constabulary, which numbered more than a thousand in 1939, has fallen to 295.

"Crime has been on the increase," says Chief Superintendent Firth Osman, chief staff officer of the force, "principally because of the lack of uniformed police patrolling the streets."

Admittance to the City of London Special Constabulary is limited to men who live or work in the City, or who have a strong connection with



Special Constable Patrick Tamplin, a stores accountant, dresses for duty. He once warned a friend at work not to boast of lawbreaking

the area. Many of the "specials" are professional men and business executives. One constable is an ex-brigadier. A peer holds the rank of sergeant. "Most of the recruits are aged between thirty-five and forty," says Osman. "The one thing they have in common is a high sense of public responsibility."

Sergeant How, who puts in an average of two four-hour patrols each month, enjoys his spells of duty. Most of them are on Sunday mornings or at night when the City is quiet. "Time goes quickly," he says. "A lot of it is spent in testing doors and windows. I find alleyways I never suspected were there. Often I stop to read a stone tablet which I never had time to notice before."

Members of the constabulary seldom go looking for trouble. They prefer to exercise diplomacy rather than coercion in keeping the peace. "We consider that our function is to discourage crime," says How. "Detecting it is the province of the professionals."

One of his colleagues, Staff-Sergeant Clifford Walter, a fifty-one year old insurance broker, recently encountered two drunks late at night. "They were standing in the road, pledging

eternal friendship. I asked them if they would kindly go away." One left immediately; the other said that he didn't know where to go.

"When I suggested that he could go home he said that he didn't know where he lived. I persuaded him to turn out his pockets and he produced an insurance card, which bore his address, and a handful of money. I called a taxi, asked the driver to take him to the appropriate railway station, and he departed quite happily."

Once, while visiting members of his section, Walter saw a police lamp flashing in a street bordering the City. "I found a colleague standing beside a drunk who had settled down on the pavement. He wasn't committing a nuisance. We carried him across the street and left him on a doorstep in the Metropolitan police area."

Half an hour later Walter passed the spot again and encountered his colleague standing beside the drunken man. He was told: "They've shifted him back again."

Applicants with the necessary qualifications for joining the constabulary are given training in police methods and first-aid. They undertake their first patrols under supervision and are allowed to patrol alone only when proved capable. Fred Cooley, an inspector with thirty-one years' service, whose section of nineteen includes a solicitor, an architect, a commissionaire and a university student, says: "A high standard of discipline is accepted as normal. Most of the section have served in the forces and on duty they need very little supervision."

Members of the constabulary, which has four divisions, three foot and one mobile, which is equipped with cars owned by the members themselves, report for duty at the regular police station where their division is based, and their patrols are allocated by the regular officer on duty.

Their approach to police work is refreshingly unofficial. Walter, while lining the Coronation route in 1953, saw a small boy crouched miserably at the edge of the crowd, drenched by the rain. "I invited him to share my cloak, and he peered through a slit at the passing procession."

But How finds that the public are not always considerate. "Motorists often pull up beside me while I am controlling traffic and ask where they can park. Others ask to be directed to Oxford or the Great North Road, and one optimist wanted to know the way to the Memorial Theatre at Stratford-on-Avon."

The constabulary, which is maintained by the
Continued on page 29

IN SHORT

Ladies Of The Office

Nor we forget the Fair, who play their part
In moving, *Industry*, thy mighty heart!
Lo, in trim frocks scarce veiling nylon knees,
Marilyn, Sandra, Greta, girls that please—
As pretty a bunch of kittens-on-the-keys,
Or nymphs, as we shall meet this side
th' Hesperides;

The Boss around—a hive of busy bees,
The Boss away—a magpies' nest! With ease
B.B.C. English switches to Americanese
As they re-live last evening's film or dance,
Discuss what's new in fashion or romance,
The telly, or the crooner of the hour,
Boy friends—or why Miss Mincing looks so
sour.

Let the door open, straight those heads
demure

Are bent, deciphering some text obscure,
While nimble fingers dash like express trains
Across the clattering keys; else, silence reigns.

FRANCIS NEWBOLD

Tidy Little Matter

What has happened to the screwdriver that I distinctly remember leaving on the dining-room mantelpiece so that it would be handy when I found a moment to attend to the loose hinge on the sideboard that my wife has been complaining about since early in the autumn?

Your wife's mother came across it when dusting Christmas cards in her interfering way and put it in the rose bowl on top of the bookcase in the sitting-room, so that she would know where it was if anyone asked for it during her stay.

Then why isn't it there now?

Because your daughter was hunting about for drawing-pins to hang up calendars with



Starke's Guide To Good Manners



"No hostess who is worth her salt would deny her guests the subtle compliment of showing she took trouble for their visit"

and naturally thought the handle of the screwdriver would do nicely for tapping them into the wall of her bedroom—

Why look for drawing-pins in the rose bowl?

That is a supplementary question. The point I am making is that the telephone rang while she was on her way upstairs, so she temporarily put the screwdriver down on the landing window-sill where it was luckily found three weeks later by your eldest son. He *meant* to put it back where he found it, but by the time he had tightened the rear lamp-bracket on his bicycle it was later than he thought, and as far as he remembers he left it carefully—

Absolutely typical. So you advise me, I suppose, to go and grovel about on my hands and knees in the bicycle shed—

Is it possible that you have forgotten that you yourself discovered it a week or two ago in the kitchen drawer where the mincing-machine is kept, and carried it upstairs and downstairs, angrily demanding why the devil people who borrowed your tools could not take the trouble to put them back in the toolbox where they belonged?

Never mind all that. The point is, where did I put it?

Ah, now that is a question.

A. R. MERTON

Home

Home is what you leave behind
And pay a tidy sum
To get that thrill of thrills to find
That you've a letter from.

RICHARD ARMOUR

Other People's Letters

We have to be very careful and my husband's salary is not quite enough for us to live on, but up to now we have had some unexpected extra resources every year, which keeps us from having a deficit.

I hope, in any case, that my husband and I may soon find steady work. Then we could not only make both ends meet but also save something to ensure the future of our child. I only want to pass my doctor's examination before looking for work. At the moment we have so much work with our new metals that I cannot prepare for my doctorate. It is

based on this work, it is true, but it requires extra study which I cannot take up at the moment.

Our health is good. My husband no longer suffers as much from rheumatism since he has been on a diet consisting chiefly of milk, eggs and vegetables, doing without wine and red meat and drinking a great deal of water. I am very well; I don't cough at all, and I have nothing the matter with my lungs, as has been shown by medical examination and several analyses.

Who wrote this letter? See foot of this column.

Change

Once Youth serenaded
With little gifts and posies
Wrote verses sweet and
Sent its love red roses:
Now it bonks upon the hooter
Of the very latest model scooter.

ANNE NEWMARCH

Just Published

It was about that time that I first saw my future wife. I used to live at No. 3 and she was at No. 5. She and her sister had noticed me first, I imagine. . . . I had had very little experience of girls at all.

At last I plucked up courage to speak to "The Woods Girl" next door, after she had peeped over the fence at me. I actually called and found her mother most sweet, quiet, fascinating, and very dark. I rather guessed that there might be something French in her background. Her father was a retired Paymaster (a little alarming!), but he was quite kind to me, and this in spite of my goings-on.

This was in the days of ping-pong, and although I am fairly skilful at the game, I worked out a plan by which a ball could be rattled in an irregular manner on the table, so that the rest of the household listened happily to the "play," whilst my future wife and myself were engaged in a totally different fashion!

He Lit The Lamp, a biography of Professor A. M. Low, edited by Ursula Bloom, published by Burke.

The letter above was written by Madame Marie Curie to her brother in 1899, when the Curies were engaged in their work on radium.

Tim Molony never runs true to form. He ignores trainer's orders and still wins; he has even poured wine on a dinner guest. To him it all makes horse-sense

The racing rebel rides his hunches

by FRANCIS HITCHING

OVER central England, Tim Molony, the jockey, and his aeroplane pilot lost their way and ran short of fuel. The ground two thousand feet below was completely unfamiliar.

Molony was flying from his home near Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire, to Buckfastleigh racecourse, Devonshire, where he was to ride that afternoon. They had to find their way quickly to Cheltenham airport, where they could refuel.

Molony decided that there was only one thing to do. He told the pilot to make a forced landing beside a farmer ploughing in a field. As the aeroplane taxied bumpily to a stop, Molony opened the cockpit and shouted: "Where's Cheltenham?"

Open-mouthed, the farmer pointed westwards. The pilot took off again, and finally found the airfield with only enough fuel in the tank for five more minutes' flying. Molony was unmoved. "If you want to know the way," he says, "the best thing to do is to stop and ask someone."

Throughout his career Molony has been guided by impulses of this kind. "On or off the racecourse," says Michael Ward, a neighbouring farmer, "he never hesitates to take a chance. What's more, he usually gets away with it."

Besides being Britain's most unconventional steeplechase jockey, Molony is probably the richest. An eager, stocky, aggressive Irishman of thirty-eight, he has been champion jockey "over the sticks" five times (a feat exceeded only by the prewar jockey Gerry Wilson) and has won practically every race in the National Hunt calendar since he came to Britain in 1946. From a seventeenth-century farmhouse in the village of Wymondham he cultivates three hundred acres of land and owns eleven horses, some of which may form the basis of a stable he hopes to start when he retires.

He is currently among the leaders in the jockeys' list. Many experts think that his unpredictable habits make him the most formidable rider in any race. One bookmaker says: "He's one of the least stylish jockeys in the country, and to us the most dangerous. He can turn form upside down. Any horse he rides is a potential winner."

This year at Nottingham he had strict pre-race instructions to hold back a horse named The Ovens, which was expected to tire in the heavy going if the early pace was too fast. But after

only a few jumps Molony decided to go in front—and he stayed there throughout the race to win by fifteen lengths.

On another occasion he was riding a nervous, fifty-to-one outsider which had fallen in several previous races and was thought to have no finishing speed. Unexpectedly, Molony nursed the horse a full twenty lengths behind the main bunch of runners. He watched them fall one by one until he was left with only two competitors. In the final straight he overtook them easily, with his horse still comparatively untired.

Fred Rimell, trainer of many of the horses he rides, has often despaired of Molony's tactics. "It's impossible to guess whether he will do as he's told in a race. On balance, though, his snap judgments have been right more often than wrong."

Molony's independence has landed him in a number of disputes. One year he decided that it would be as easy to land an aircraft on a racecourse as on a field and made the pilot put him down in the middle of the Worcester circuit. After the meeting he found the aeroplane surrounded by policemen, who arrested him and the pilot, took them to the station and threatened to charge them with landing contrary to a by-law. It took an hour's argument between Molony and the chief inspector before the idea of prosecution was abandoned.

Several seasons ago, in Torquay, he was unable to find a parking place for his car and left it in a taxi-rank.

Some time later he came back to find that taxi-drivers had moved his car and had let down the tyres. Seeing the drivers in a café, Molony retaliated by letting down the taxis' tyres.

When the men returned they were greeted by a blast of abuse from Molony, who insisted that

they must blow up his tyres again or face a court action. Taken aback, they agreed. Says a jockey who was with Molony shortly afterwards: "There are not many men who can be in the wrong all through and still get their own way."

Molony's stubborn confidence in himself is a racing asset. "Before a race he hardly ever doubts his ability to finish in the first three places," says George Vickers, who is one of Molony's closest friends. "Once a race has started, he's determined to justify his optimism. He never stops trying."

Five jumps from the finish of the 1947 Stanley Chase at Aintree, Molony and Lord Mildmay were the only jockeys left with mounts out of fifteen starters. Then Molony's horse fell and Lord Mildmay's refused to jump. Molony remounted and finished the course, winning from another remounted horse by fifteen minutes, the biggest winning margin ever recorded.

Molony's first ride was at the age of three, when he was put on a donkey in a field near his home at Croom, County Limerick. He cried so loudly when he was removed from its back that the animal was bought for him. For several years he rode it to school rather than walk the two miles from his father's farm.

In 1936, as an amateur jockey, he rode his first win on one of his father's horses. He turned professional in 1940 and rode in Ireland until 1946, when he came to England as a stable boy.

After six months he was engaged by Willie Stephenson, one of England's best-known National Hunt trainers, with whom he has stayed ever since. During his second season he rode thirty-four winners and in 1948-49, when he was promoted to first jockey, he rode sixty

Continued on page 30



Riding is a family affair at Molony's country home. When he is not at work he goes hunting with his wife Stella and he has given a pony to each of his children. As a boy in Ireland Molony used to ride to school on a pony



Joan looked at David, her eyes shining. "Alan and I are going to be married," she said. David tried to say something polite, but the words stuck in his throat

THE WAY ACROSS

by DUDLEY BARKER

ILLUSTRATED BY BATCHELOR

ALTHOUGH the river was roaring outside the cottage, David heard the car drive up and somebody beating on the door. Who could want to use the ferry on such a night?

He got out of bed and looked from his window. The river was high and tumultuous. A glimpse of moon showed occasionally through the cloud rack, so that he could see the water was an inch or two above the level of the landing stage against which the ferry boat was moored. The overhead cable by which the boat was hauled across, stretching out into the darkness, was closer to the water than it had been in daylight.

The knocking on the door below was repeated. David heard his uncle go grumbling down the stairs. He went out on to the landing and peered over the stair rail. His uncle, with a raincoat pulled on over his nightshirt—old Matt Green still wore an old-fashioned flannel shirt at night, slit up at the side to his thin knees—was struggling with the bolt at the top of the door.

When he got it back, Matt edged the door open and the sudden gust of wind blew out the candle in his hand. But David had seen who was standing at the door—Joan Adams and Alan Raven, the man she'd been running round with all summer.

"Hallo, Matt," Raven was saying. "Sorry to

David raced through the storm. Only he could save the girl he loved . . . and the man who was his worst enemy

knock you up so late, but we got delayed on the drive down from town."

"I'm taking no ferry across tonight."

"Oh, come now. I must get Joan home."

"Then drive round by the bridge."

"But that's thirty miles each way. It'd take us nearly three hours on a night like this."

"Can't help that. River's running too strong."

"Matt," said Joan, "please."

At the sound of her voice David flushed in the darkness and then went back into his room, reaching for his trousers and jersey. Joan's voice always roused in him an intense devotion.

For a year he had worshipped her, but without a word, of course, and without hope or expectation. She lived at one end of the ferry; he at the other.

Her father's house, the doctor's house, stood in that small section of the village on the far bank of the river; a fine old rambling country house, with a tennis court beyond the orchard, and a car standing in the yard that had once been stables. Whereas David, since his father had been killed in the war and his mother had later died of pneumonia, lived in the ferryman's cottage with old Matt Green, his uncle.

BUT the real barrier was their ages. No matter how he regarded it, the fact was that she was every bit of twenty-one, and he was only fifteen. He stared with anger at the silly years between them.

He went downstairs. Matt had brought the two of them in and closed the door, so that he could relight the candle. Then he lit the lamp standing on the tallboy, and Joan saw David as he came down.

"Hallo, David, we're being a frightful nuisance to your uncle."

"But look, Matt, I must get Joan home," Raven was arguing. "We've been in town all day and had no idea the river was so high, or I'd have driven the other way. But now that we're here, you'll run us across, won't you?"

Matt shook his head stubbornly.

Raven laughed. He laughed at everything, it seemed to David, and in a sneering way. All summer he had been coming down to see Joan, laughing at the village and the river and the ferry as though it were some quaint old place. And Joan laughed with him.

Alan Raven was an actor, they said, or some such highfalutin thing. He was tall and, of course, good looking. He wore clothes that looked as though they had been designed in town for country wear.

He was as many years older than Joan as she than David. Yet she seemed to delight in him. All summer David had watched them meeting, laughing together, taking a punt out on the river or playing tennis on the court behind the orchard, or driving over the countryside in Raven's car.

"Come on, now," Raven was saying. "You're not frightened of the river, surely, Matt?"

"No, I'm not frightened—not of the river nor of nothing else. But to cross with the stream running like that's daft."

"The cable is clear, isn't it?"

"Aye."

"Well, then," urged Raven, "what's the danger?" He laughed again. "Or is it that you're annoyed at being got out of bed?"

Joan cut in. "If Matt says he won't go, we'll have to accept that, Alan. The only thing that bothers me is that Father will be worrying. We didn't intend to stay so long in town, but—well, things happened."

She looked at Raven and they both suddenly

giggled, as if it were the best joke of the day. Or as if they were nervous.

"Doctor Adams don't know where you are?" asked Matt.

"Not really, Matt, as a matter of fact," Joan admitted.

"You could telephone him."

"No go," said Raven. "We tried. This damn storm has blown down the wires. Oh well, we'll go round by car. Sorry if I was bad-tempered, Matt. Come on, darling."

David flushed again as he called her that. He knew it meant nothing. Everyone was "darling" to Raven. But the mere sound of it angered him.

Matt, shrugging his shoulders, said slowly: "If it's the doctor who'll be worried, I'd best take you, then."

"But you said it wasn't safe."

"If it's for the doctor," repeated Matt gruffly, "that's different."

He made off upstairs to dress. Joan looked uncertainly after him. She said: "I suppose it's all right, Alan?"

"Of course it is. It was only the old boy being cantankerous because we got him out of bed." Then Raven realized that David was still standing there in the shadows. "Oh, sorry. But I expect you've called your uncle cantankerous before now—or something a bit stronger, eh?" And he laughed again, that sneer of a laugh.

David said nothing but moved to the door to look out at the river. Then he felt a touch on his arm. "Don't be cross, David," Joan said, "and I'll tell you a secret, because you've always been my special friend. Alan, you don't mind if I tell David?"

"I don't mind if you tell the world, darling. It was you who wanted to tell your father first."

"But he'll soon know now. David, Alan and I are going to be married. We only found out today."

In the quiet lamplight David could see her eyes shining at her news. He ought to say something polite, he knew that. He ought to offer his congratulations in a worldly sort of way. But the words stuck in his throat. Instead, he suddenly broke his arm free from her touch and ran into the darkness by the river bank.

"Now, what on earth—?" he heard Joan ask.

"He loves you, my sweet," said Raven mockingly. "And I can't say I blame him. He has taste."

"Oh, what nonsense. . . ."

David heard nothing more. A few yards' separation and all sound of speech was overwhelmed by the roar of the river and the wind. But the rain had stopped and he could see clearly enough. After a while he saw the faint light of a lantern move from the cottage. Uncle Matt was down again now, preparing the ferry boat.

Then the gleam began to move gradually out across the river as his uncle hauled on the cable. The boat itself and its three occupants were at first only a dark shadow behind. But then the clouds parted again and the moon shone wanly. He could see the boat then, with the water rushing by it, and the whitecaps of the race.

At the same moment he saw another silhouette behind it, twisting and turning in the river. He jumped to the bank side, yelling a warning. But to yell was useless. Or was it? Had his voice sounded faintly? He thought he saw one of the figures in the boat turn his head and perceive the danger; a tree trunk, torn from the bank somewhere upstream, rushing down the flood.

Even as David watched, an upstanding branch of the tree caught in the cable, too far from the

boat for Matt to be able to reach and free it. The boat swirled round wildly as the cable was dragged downstream. The tree trunk twisted and dipped in the current, bobbing the boat up and down on the cable. David, watching motionless from the bank, thought for a moment that the boat, which was nothing but a flat-bottomed tub, would be swamped.

And then, with a crack that he could hear from where he stood despite the roar of wind and water, the cable parted. The tree trunk lurched, freed itself. In the centre of the stream the lantern hovered and then began to move down the river.

David watched in horror as the boat gathered speed. He thought he heard one shout carried like a whisper on the wind. The clouds swept over the moon, and the lantern dipped and vanished as the boat was borne swiftly into the next reach of the river.

He stared after it. Then he was seized with panic, wanted to run, in any direction, with no purpose. That passed after a moment. Everything now, he told himself, depended on his keeping calm. He knew the river—had known it all his life. What, then, would happen to the boat?

The first question: had his uncle taken any oars? David ran quickly back to the cottage, fumbled in the kitchen for another storm lantern, found some matches to light it, and ran out again to the boathouse. There lay the oars on their rack. It was not surprising. The oars were rarely kept in the boat, and were used only when they detached her from the ferry cable for some other purpose. But if only his uncle had taken them that night. . . .

He had to keep calm; to think. There was no way of controlling the boat, so what would happen to it?

It would be borne in the main strength of the stream. And here the river ran between high banks. There were two, perhaps three places where Uncle Matt might be able to grasp a trailing branch. If he could do that and draw the boat ashore, all would be well.

But if not? And what if they were thrown into the river? They would stand scant chance in such a race. Matt would stand none; he could not swim.

Then David shuddered at the thought of something even worse. The river ran in a broad semi-circular curve for perhaps five miles. Then it plunged over the great weir.

DAVID knew at once the only point at which he, from the bank, might be able to help. Fifty yards upstream from the weir was another cable ferry. If they never reached it, they were either safe or drowned. But if they did, and he could be there ahead of them, he could perhaps haul the other ferry boat sufficiently into the stream to get them off.

Could he be there in time? It would take the boat, he reckoned, less than half an hour to reach that point. The road, going straighter, was of course much shorter; about three miles. He could make it.

He took a quick glance at the car which Raven had parked by the side of the cottage. But he did not know how to drive. Instead, he ran into the lean-to at the back door and pulled out his bicycle.

Now he was moving fast, pedalling down the lane. The light from his lamp was not bright, for the battery was low. But he knew the road.

But he did not know what obstacles had fallen upon it in the gale. Twice during the first quarter of a mile his lamplight picked out, just in time for

NEXT WEEK

FIFTY MILLION GOLDEN EGGS

Chocolate and cream, caviar
and champagne.... Jerome Hood
tells the surprising story of
your Easter in an eggshell

Splendid Freedom

by DUDLEY HOYS

What was the mystery of
the stranger on the fells?

Murder in wildest
Africa—a thrilling
new story...

by ALASTAIR SCOBIE

TOTEM SACRIFICE

Christine was in the store for
minutes only. When she came out
—the pushchair was empty...

Afternoon of Terror

by FRANK BENNETT

him to swerve, the branch of a tree that had fallen across the road. He knew he ought to go more slowly, take more care. But he dared not. In his mind he could see the boat twisting in the swirling river, with his uncle helpless in the bows, and Joan clinging to the man she said she was going to marry. David put that thought from him.

In the darkness he nearly missed the turning on to the main road, but once on it the going was easier. The trees stood farther back from the verges and there was less danger of being struck by a fall. But this sense of greater safety nearly did for him. He did not realize that where the road dipped by the side of the lake it had flooded, and the surface was water. He was travelling so fast that he went into it with a shower of blinding spray. He felt the front wheel twist soggily beneath his hands and the bicycle slip towards the lake; if it went in and sank, he might be unable to get it out.

His feet, as they pedalled, went under the water. Desperately he kept going, standing up on the pedals, risking his balance, thrusting with all his strength. Then the road rose again and he was through.

AFTER that there were no more real hazards. Although, as he pedalled down the lane towards the ferry, he rode under an arch of straining, roaring trees and through a hail of twigs and leaves. At any moment he expected a blow on his shoulders or across his face. But none came. And with relief he dismounted by the landing stage on the river bank.

This was only a daytime ferry; no cottage here and, he at once realized with dismay, no ferryman. The boat lay snugly under a roof built alongside the landing stage. It was fastened by a heavy chain padlocked to an iron staple.

David gazed wildly out at the dark river. At that moment he realized that the loud roar was

not only the running flood. It was also the weir.

There was no light coming down the reach above the ferry. But their lantern might have gone overboard or been extinguished. He had reckoned he would have about ten minutes' grace, but he was only guessing at the speed at which the boat would be swept down river and he might have guessed wrong. At any minute he might see it whirling past in the murk, and be helpless to check it.

Desperately he cast around until he found a big stone with which to batter the padlock; the chain and staple were a hopeless prospect. Luckily the padlock was old and weak. At the third blow it gaped. Whipping his lamp from the cycle, David jumped into the boat and shoved it out, hauling on the cable. This one, thank heavens, still stretched firmly across the river.

Once clear of the landing stage, he was aghast at the strength of the flood. Had they already gone by? He would not think of it. He would get out into the stream and stop them. But how, with this slow ferry, could he get into position swiftly enough to intercept? He began to panic. Then he checked himself. *Think. Keep calm. Think.*

And of course the answer was clear. The boat would be swept down where the stream ran swiftest—a little to this side of the centre of the river.

He pulled hard on the cable. The boat moved reluctantly towards the spot he had chosen. He would station himself there and wait. It was all he could do.

Once there, he gazed into the darkness upstream. He could see nothing—nothing but ghostly whitecaps where the race bubbled. The roar of the weir was deafening him. He sank back into the boat in despair.

And then he saw the light. It came bobbing and weaving, faintly shining up river. David

leaped up, shouting. But shouting, of course, was useless.

Where had he put his cycle lamp? For a moment he could not find it, then he remembered and pulled it from inside his jersey. He switched it on—pray God that it was not too feeble by now to be seen—and directed it upstream, waving it back and forth in a big, wide arc. There was no response from the lantern. But perhaps they had seen him.

As the light drew closer he began urgently to calculate where the boat would come. A few yards, perhaps, closer to the bank. He hauled himself that much nearer in.

Now he could see the dark huddle behind the lantern. Soon the boat was close enough for him to make out shapes. It was, he at once saw, water-logged. It lay so low that its speed was slower than that of the stream, and the three people clinging to it were almost awash.

Matt was in the bows, nearest to him. Raven was crouched on the centre seat, which was just below water, holding Joan in his free arm.

Trying to make his voice sound above the roaring of water, David was yelling: "Jump! You'll have to jump!"

WHETHER they could hear him he did not know. What he suddenly did realize was that he was too far into the stream. The drowning boat had lurched and spun in an eddy, and would pass between him and the bank.

He gave a violent heave on the cable. His own boat ducked, then moved in. The other swirled round again. The two of them touched.

"Jump!" he yelled.

As he shouted, he tried to grab the gunwale of the other boat, and for a moment succeeded in holding it.

"Jump!" he gasped.

Matt, who was nearest, summoned up strength for a leap and landed safely. The movement snatched the gunwale from David's hands. He stared for one helpless instant. He saw that Raven, who could have made it, was swaying and struggling to lift Joan.

Raven got her up, held her out over the side of the boat. As the two surged closer, David lunged out, caught her wrist and snatched her from him. She went into the river, but he held on and hauled her to safety. Even at that tense moment he knew that this man he had despised was a hero.

He was too occupied getting Joan inboard to see exactly what happened next. He knew that the other boat had gone by. He heard his uncle shouting to Raven to jump, then the splash as he obeyed and leaped into the river.

By the time David could turn to help, Matt had pushed out an oar—David had not even seen that there was one in the boat—and Raven, swimming in one furious burst against the stream, had just clutched it.

Then Matt thrust the handle of the oar into David's hands, and himself leaned gingerly over the gunwale, inching his hand down the oar towards Raven's until the tips of their fingers met, and then their flat hands, and then each had a frenzied grip of the other's wrist. And Matt pulled Raven aboard. Raven collapsed, exhausted, on the flat bottom of the boat.

It was then that Joan—David had almost forgotten her—flung herself past to kneel by Raven's side, taking his head into her arms and against her breast, oblivious of all else.

Matt was hauling in now towards the bank. David stood staring at the two of them in the boat. Raven opened his eyes and smiled up at her, a smile that no longer seemed a sneer.

As he saw her look down at Raven, David then understood that there were emotions of whose existence he had not known; that a boy of fifteen could be hotly arrogant and foolish.

But he also felt an inexplicable elation, as though he had gone a little way across to becoming a man.

THE END

© Dudley Barker, 1958



Edwards doesn't use a "hide" for bird-watching. "I just stay still," he says. But once, cramp made him topple backwards into a bed of mud

Percy Edwards spoofs the dawn chorus

by REX GRIZELL

Nature can't resist him. Chirp of bird, chatter of
monkey, trumpet of elephant . . . he's got a voice for them all

IN the London Zoo one day a middle-aged couple paused at a cage in which a brightly coloured bird was monotonously calling "chink-chink-chink" on one note.

The man read out the name "Tinker Bird" and was looking at a map showing the distribution of various species in tropical Africa, when the woman said: "Look, Bert, it can do it with its beak closed." The man stared fixedly at the bird for half a minute. The bird stared defiantly back, but although its beak was firmly shut the "chink-chink-chink" was as clear as ever.

As the couple walked off—the man shaking his head and muttering to himself—a small, neatly built man who had been standing behind them, moved off in the other direction laughing to himself.

The tinker bird is only one of a thousand birds and animals which Percy Edwards can mimic exactly. Without using any mechanical aids, or even putting his fingers in his mouth, Edwards can imitate the sound of almost any living creature from a mosquito to an elephant. The roaring of a lion, the chattering of monkeys, the screech of a peacock, the blood-chilling scream of a vixen, and the barks of more than thirty breeds of dog are among the sounds that led one critic to describe him as a "human Noah's Ark." He pays regular visits to the zoo to refresh his memory of the voices of foreign birds and animals. The songs and calls of the 235 British wild birds he imitates, he learns at first hand in the countryside.

Edwards has made more than seven hundred radio broadcasts and seventy-five television appearances, and has provided animal sounds for more than a dozen well-known films. In the recent film *Three Men In A Boat* the producers could persuade the dog Montmorency to do anything except bark at the right time. They showed the completed film to Edwards and allowed him to fit the growls, whines, barks and yaps to the dog's actions. At one point he imitates the sound of seven or eight dogs simultaneously invading a cricket pitch. They

frighten a horse, which whinnies. Edwards is the horse as well.

At forty-nine, Edwards, a blue-eyed, lean-jawed man who neither drinks nor smokes, claims that he weighs the same and is just as fit as when he was seventeen. He often rises before dawn so that he can be in the woods near his Suffolk home when the birds begin to sing. For years he has spent many summer nights in the open, walking for miles and snatching an hour or two's sleep in dry ditches, haystacks and barns. Down near the river at Levington, Suffolk, is an old, pollarded tree with a massive flat top from which Edwards has watched the dawn break dozens of times every year.

Not long ago he was walking down a Lincolnshire lane at three o'clock one dark night when he noticed the headlights of a car behind him. It stopped a few feet from him. Doors slammed and a harsh voice said: "Just a moment."

"Sorry, friend, I've got no moments to spare," said Edwards, tightening his grip on the heavy stick that he carries on night walks.

"Where are you going?"

"If it's any business of yours, I'm going bird-watching."

"Don't be funny. I asked you a civil question—let's have a straight answer."

"If you're a policeman, switch those lights down and I'll give you a card."

The police inspected his card. "Sorry we troubled you, Mr. Edwards, but we are out looking for two dangerous escaped convicts reported in this district. When I saw you with that stick I felt sure we'd found one. Goodbye, sir, glad to have met you." The policemen drove off.

"The black night closed round me," says Edwards, who has a dramatic, Celtic turn of phrase. "I saw a murderous convict crouched in every shadowy bush. I was never so happy to see the dawn."

Edwards's bird songs easily deceive the birds themselves. "It's a poor bird that can't be made to sing by rivalry," he says. When the B.B.C. take a van to a wood in the Home Counties to record the nightingale late on summer evenings, Edwards goes with them. Brian Johnston, the

B.B.C. commentator, recalls an occasion at Hever, in Kent, when, with less than a minute to go before the broadcast, the wood fell silent.

"I told Percy to do his stuff," says Johnston.

Edwards went rapidly through as many likely bird songs as he could, trying to stimulate the birds to answer. "The birds began to reply at once and when we checked the recording afterwards we could identify twenty-eight different bird songs," says Johnston.

Edwards has travelled all over Britain to find and listen to some of the rare British birds.

"There is no need to build a hide if you want to see birds closely," he says. "It is enough to stay perfectly still and make sure they don't see your eyes. That frightens them."

There is friendly rivalry between Edwards and local gamekeepers as to which of them is first to hear the cuckoo, or nightingale. One Monday last April, Edwards was out in a wood listening for the first nightingale. He imitated the bird's song. "I thought if there was one there it would answer me." He heard nothing. A few days later he met the keeper, who asked him if he had heard the nightingale.

"Not yet."

"I've got you beat then. I heard one last Monday night."

EDWARDS's painstaking study of birds in their habitats has made him one of Britain's leading ornithologists. He has lectured all over the country in places as varied as luncheon clubs, women's institutes, lunatic asylums, Eton College and Holloway Prison. When lecturing to children he usually finishes by offering to imitate any bird they name. At one children's home he was answering requests from all parts of the hall, when a straight-faced little girl stood up and said: "Please, mister, a ladybird."

"The kids tumbled to it much quicker than I did," says Edwards. "While I was trying to think of a ladybird's song they were screaming with laughter."

Edwards, who is proud of the fact that he knows what he is whistling about, can be aggressively precise about his work. For the film *Valley Of Eagles* the sound director asked him to make deer sounds. He imitated fallow deer, roe deer, reindeer, and when he roared like a red deer in the rutting season, the director was satisfied. "That's the sound we want," she

Continued on page 30



Beginning a thrilling new serial of romance

THE

OLD JOACHIM, the innkeeper, appeared while Henry was signing the register. He took Cynthia's hand and kissed it. "Gracious lady! And Mr. Herrin—it is a great pleasure to see you both again. Your journey was okay?"

"Very okay," Cynthia said. She looked about her. The wall plates gleamed as brightly against the dark oak panels. The trophies of the hunt, dominated by the huge boar's head, stared down with the same cosy indifference. "It's lovely to be back, Joachim."

Henry said: "I hear it's been a bad summer."

"Terrible," Joachim agreed. "The river is nearly a foot above what is to be expected."

"But there's still a way clear into the caves?"

"Ah, yes. But they are closed."

"Closed?" Henry asked. "But why?"

Joachim chuckled. "You must not worry, Mr. Herrin. For you, I am sure, there will be no difficulty. It is just that you must ask the permission of the Graf."

"Graf?"

"At the beginning of the year he was sent back at last from Russia. Everything is being put in order again. Did you not see men working at the Schloss as you came by?"

Henry nodded. "I thought it was some government scheme. And you say he's closed the caves?"

"He did not wish to do so. But there was a fall of rock in the caves last winter, and there is thought to be some danger still. It is for that reason he has closed them."

Cynthia asked: "You think he will be willing to give permission?"

"I am sure of it. I have spoken to him of the Englishman who comes every year to the Frohnberg caves, and he has said that he would like to meet you."

Henry said: "The sooner the better."

"That will be seen to," Joachim told them. "Will you have a glass of wine, Mrs. Herrin?"

"Not for me, thank you. I really must see about the unpacking."

Joachim said: "If you would grant us about half an hour, Mrs. Herrin. It is necessary to have your room made ready, and the baggage of the other people taken out."

"They're leaving today?"

"No, no." He smiled slyly. "They also are English, and they are on their honeymoon. They will stay yet another week, but at the beginning I told them that the room was reserved for you and Mr. Herrin. They understand all that."

Cynthia looked quickly at Henry; he shrugged understandingly. She said to Joachim: "No, you mustn't move them now. We shall be quite all

and terror in the depths of the earth—by JOHN CHRISTOPHER

CAVES OF NIGHT

right in the room you would have put them into."

"Ah, no! That is your room by right."

Cynthia said firmly: "I insist. A honeymoon only happens once."

Henry said, "Yes, of course they must have the room."

"That is very kind of you," Joachim said. "They will be glad, the young people."

The room to which they were shown was quite pleasant. Henry, when they were alone, stood by the window.

"He's right," he commented. "The Frohn's higher than I ever remember." He turned. "Do you want any help with the unpacking?"

Cynthia looked at him in mild exasperation. "You ask me that every year."

"Do I?" He grinned. "Then I'll head for the bathroom. Throw me my things, will you?"

Cynthia heard her husband whistling his way along the landing. She began transferring clothes from the cases to the large chest-of-drawers that took up most of the corner between the windows.

There was a little knock on the door. Expecting one of the maids, she called out: "*Komm herein!*"

She did not turn round immediately the door opened, and a voice behind her said: "That did mean 'come in,' didn't it?"

The girl in the doorway was in her early twenties. "I hope you don't mind my barging in like this," she said. "I'm Heather Be—" She stumbled on the word and her colour deepened. "Heather Allen. Joachim told me you had insisted on our staying in the room you usually have. It's awfully decent of you. I did want to thank you right away."

Cynthia offered her hand. "I'm Cynthia Herrin. Joachim told us you were on your honeymoon. We're old hands here."

"Oh—how many years have you been coming to Frohnberg?" Heather asked.

Cynthia went on with her unpacking. "This is our fifth."

"Is that as long as you've been married?"

Cynthia smiled ruefully. "I'm afraid not. Nowhere near. We've been married sixteen years." The door swung open. Henry came in, and she added: "This is my husband, Henry. Henry, this is Heather Allen who's also staying here."

Henry put down the things he was carrying and obediently advanced to shake hands.

Heather said: "I must be getting back. There's all sorts of things I've got to do. I only popped in to say thank you for the room."

When she had gone, Henry observed: "Honeymoon couples seem to get younger every year. . . ."

They had planned on a walk before dinner but

Joachim came towards them at the foot of the stairs. He said: "The Graf Frohnberg is here, in my parlour. He hoped to speak with you."

As they followed the innkeeper Cynthia murmured: "The village is crowded this season. The nobility and the English. Just like old times."

The Graf got up from one of the chairs as they entered the room. Cynthia was a little disappointed that he did not click his heels. He shook hands, smiling faintly, with Henry and herself. He had steel-grey hair and a tanned and deeply lined face. She placed him at close to fifty.

"I have heard of you," he said, "the English lady and gentleman who return each summer to our caves. You are very welcome to Frohnberg."

Cynthia did not care, she decided, for the hint of feudal patronage in his tone. It was clearly essential, however, to bear with any minor disadvantages if he had the power to ban Henry from the caves."

She said: "We love Frohnberg, quite apart from the caves."

"I hear they've had to be closed?" Henry said.

"That is so. There has been a landslip."

"I was hoping you might be willing to make an exception in my case."

"I think that is possible. But I should like first to talk with you about it." The Graf looked at his watch. "Perhaps you would do me the honour of having dinner with me this evening?"

Cynthia said uncertainly: "Joachim will have made arrangements already for this evening."

Joachim said: "That is nothing, Mrs. Herrin."

"I may expect you then?" the Graf asked.

"It's very good of you," Henry said. "What time would you like us to come?"

"Seven thirty—if that is not inconvenient?"

"Not at all."

The Graf shook hands with them both again, and left. They heard the rising growl of a high-powered engine shortly afterwards. . . .

THE Schloss Frohnberg stood in extensive grounds on the far side of the river from the village. It was an Italianate mansion, fronted by a broad terrace. It had been occupied by Allied troops during the war.

Cynthia said: "It's not really the sort of place one *walks* up to visit, is it?"

"If one means us, it's not the sort of place we normally visit at all."

"How old would you say he is?"

"The Graf? Forty, or thereabouts."

"I should have said fifty."

"According to Joachim, he's been a Russian

prisoner for twelve years. I don't suppose they gave him any special privileges on account of his noble birth."

Cynthia shivered. "No. What a contrast—to go from this sort of life to that; and then come back to it again."

They opted, a little uncertainly, for the large front entrance from the terrace. Their coats were taken by a manservant, who explained to them in flat, patient, rather loud German that the Graf would be with them shortly.

The room they were shown into was of classical dimensions, with a rococo plaster frieze and a painted ceiling. They were craning their necks to make out the details of the ceiling when the Graf came in.

He said: "Good evening. I regret that I was delayed. What can I get you to drink?"

"Sherry, please."

"And you, Mr. Herrin?"

"Scotch, Herr Graf."

The Graf went to a flat glass-fronted cabinet to get the drinks. He said: "My name is Albrecht. I hope you will be kind enough to use that rather than the title."

Henry said, with some awkwardness: "Of course. My wife's name is Cynthia, and mine Henry."

The Graf smiled. "It is ludicrous, you see, to be addressed as Graf in the second half of the twentieth century. It has no meaning, except, of course, to those Austrians who are foolish enough to cast their eyes backwards to nineteen-fourteen."

Cynthia hazarded: "Of course, you're not old enough to remember much about the old days yourself."

"Of course." It was difficult to see if he were smiling now or not.

Henry said: "I suppose our troops left the Schloss in a pretty shocking condition?"

Albrecht shook his head. "Not shocking; but it will take some time to restore things, as might be expected."

It was not until after dinner, over coffee in the library, that the question of the caves was raised.

Albrecht said: "Now, your caves. I should like to know about them. First, I will tell you what I know . . . that the Frohn springs out of the Frohnberg, plainly. That in the summer, when the water-level is less high, one can walk into the cave from which the river flows. The children have always played there. Also, that one may climb up the slope at the cave's end, and find a grotto with stalactites and so on. That was where the more daring children played."

"Where was the rock fall?" Henry asked.

"At the entrance. It has been wired off, and

Cynthia swung round as a sudden scratching sound came from the dark centre of the cave. "What's that?" she whispered sharply

All her married life Cynthia had stopped men making love to her. Why, then, did she not stop this one?

there is a gate which is now always kept locked."

"Was it a heavy fall?"

"No. But my land steward is uneasy about the condition of the rest. Tell me—how did you come to be interested in the caves?"

"I've been a pot-holer since I was at Cambridge," Henry said. "I've done quite a bit of it in England and Wales, and a little in France. Then five years ago we came for a holiday to Austria—to Graz, actually. Somebody mentioned the Frohnberg caves, knowing I was interested in caves. I was told there wasn't much to them—that the important caves were at Liedl, on the other side of the hills—but we thought it might be worth a run up here. Liedl was more difficult to get to."

Albrecht nodded. "From Graz, yes. You went to Liedl at a later time?"

"Not that year. I went up there on our second visit to your country, but I found the Liedl caves disappointing. They are bigger, of course, and more extensive, but I can't summon up much interest in caves that have electric light laid on. And meanwhile I had found that there was more to the Frohnberg caves than the first two chambers."

"Yes, that is what interests me. Please go on."

"I expect you know the ledge that runs round the left-hand side of the grotto?"

"Yes."

"The wall is sheer there. Above head height it's difficult to bring a light to bear on it, because the ledge you are standing on is so narrow. I had my hands over my head, feeling for any sign of carved reliefs on the wall, and I found a hole. All I could tell then was that there was a break in the rock face, two or three feet across. The following day I took in a ladder. I found the hole was a chimney, and not a particularly difficult climb, either."

"And it led you to—?"

"Another chamber, bigger than the first two."

Albrecht replenished his own glass and Henry's. "You made this discovery five years ago?"

"Yes."

"And you have since explored what lies beyond the chimney?"

"Only to a limited extent. I've followed the river in for some distance. There's another grotto about fifty yards along with a very pretty display of gypsum flowers. One could probably penetrate a good deal farther, I imagine."

"But you have not done so?"

"So far I've been too interested in the chamber immediately beyond the chimney. It's of considerable size, as I've said, and there's quite a good showing of paintings on the walls."

"Cave paintings? Here in Frohnberg? My land steward did not tell me anything of this."

"I'm afraid I kept quiet deliberately. I can only get here for a fortnight a year. This is the only speleological discovery I've ever made, and I persuaded myself that paintings which have waited tens of thousands of years for discovery could wait a few more years before going on display. Now, of course, I must leave that for you to decide."

"I should like to see them," Albrecht said. "Other than that, I prefer that they should be left in your hands. I have no feelings for art, one way or another."

Henry smiled. "Then if I have your permission, I should like to tackle the caves early in the morning."

"No brandy before you go? In that case, I will give you the key to the gate which Adolf, my steward, put up." Albrecht went across to one of the empty shelves and opened a small box. "Yes, here it is. Adolf has one, and

I have a third. You will not object if I visit you during your work?"

"We'd be delighted."

"Cynthia is also a student of cave paintings, then?"

"When she feels like it. She nobly puts up with it, at any rate."

"I like walking in the hills," Cynthia said, "or just lazing in the sunshine. There has been sunshine other summers. I'm very fond of Frohnberg."

"I hope you will make free of this house and the grounds while you are here," Albrecht said. "Both of you. And now, since it is late, I will drive you back to the inn. . . ."

The Allens were just coming down to breakfast as Henry and Cynthia prepared to leave the following morning. Heather stared curiously at them. They were wearing old clothes and Cynthia had on trousers and jersey.

"Golly, you two are off early! Oh, I suppose you're going up to the caves? Joachim said something about them. Could we come along, later?"

Henry said: "If you want to see them, we'll ask the Graf for you. He's had them closed because of a landslide."

"Are they dreadfully exciting, like Cheddar and Wookey Hole?"

Henry shook his head. "No. Rather dull." He glanced at Heather's silk blouse, gaberdine skirt and nylon stockings. "And to get there you have to crawl through a funnel about three feet across, quite apart from walking through the river."

"It sounds ghastly," Heather said. "We'll have to think it over."

As they walked out into the broad street which more or less made up the village, Cynthia said: "I'll see you settled in. I may come out again then and do a bit of climbing."

It was a twenty-minute walk to the cave entrance.

The last hundred yards were something of a scramble. They fetched up against a stout picket fence, anchored on one side to the hill and on the other projecting into the Frohn. The gate in the middle of it was heavily padlocked. Henry unlocked it. He said: "You will have to walk carefully if you aren't going to get a boot full of water."

The first signs of the landslip were evident less than ten yards inside the arch. The wall had fallen in, and in place of the ledge there was a sloping pile of rubble. Henry examined this.

"I always thought that wall was pretty firm. Probably our best move is to take to the water here. It only means a few more yards wading."

He slipped over the edge into the river. The water came to within six inches of the top of his gumboots. Cynthia said decisively: "I'll take the rubble. You can stand by to catch me if I slip."

Loose stones and earth began to slide as Cynthia scrambled across the slope. The bulk held, however, and she managed to reach the ledge on the other side.

THE cave proper lay on the right; a hole two or three feet above the surface of the water rapidly widened. Here Cynthia had to take to the water.

Henry heaved himself through the hole, having first taken off his pack and tossed that through, and then reached back to pull Cynthia after him.

"There doesn't seem to be anything wrong here. It may have been only a small local slip."

"Take things carefully, all the same."

"Don't I always?"

Their voices, as usual, echoed strangely from the walls of rock all round them. They advanced up the slanting floor of the cave. At the top they wriggled through the gap of about two feet between the opposing jaws of rock and came out into the grotto. The

steady drip of water was louder here than the distant rushing of the Frohn.

Henry's torch beam fastened on the small wooden ladder which he had left from earlier years. He carried it over to the far wall and climbed up, pushing his pack ahead of him. He heaved himself into the chimney. Cynthia followed.

She said: "This is the part I really don't like. I think I get the shivers more every time I go through it."

The chimney was about ten feet long. It came out as a fair-sized hole in the middle of the floor of the next cave. She hauled herself up behind Henry and waited while he found the acetylene lamp in his pack.

The light flared up to illuminate a cavern half as big again as the one from which they had come. Henry pointed down the slope. "There have been other falls. Look."

Cynthia said: "You might have been standing underneath when it came down. You wouldn't have had much chance."

Henry was removing the remainder of his gear from the pack. "The odds are against it. It must have been the heavy frosts they had round here last winter. It probably cracked the rock."

He walked over, holding the light, to examine the nearest wall. Cynthia followed him. "I'm not happy about it," she said.

"Nothing to worry about. The old bison's still untouched." He peered forward, tracing the smears of red and brown paint that formed the animal.

"Isn't he a beauty?"

Cynthia swung round. "What's that?" she said sharply.

It was a dull, scratching sound. Henry cocked his ear to it, and then walked back towards the middle of the cave. He bent over, and called down the chimney. "Can you manage all right?"

Albrecht's muffled voice came up to them. "Thank you, yes."

Henry held the lamp over the hole; in a moment Albrecht emerged from the chimney's constriction.

Henry led the way over to the painting of the bison. "This is my favourite. See the foreshortening effect with that slope of the spine away from the neck? All those years ago they knew more about perspective than modern man does."

"Yes. The flank is badly worn—by erosion?"

"No, by spear jabs and arrows. That's the magic part of it—to bring them success in hunting. The Australian aborigines still do it."

They made the round of the paintings. Henry said: "As you see, not a particularly striking collection."

Albrecht pointed down the slope of the cave. "And in that direction one finds the Frohn again?"

"Yes, do you want to have a look?"

"I will wait until another time. I find that caves do not excite me as they did when I was a boy. I will leave you to your studies."

"Perhaps you could take Cynthia with you," Henry said. "She only came to see me settled in."

"I shall be delighted."

Cynthia said: "Are you sure you'll be all right, Henry? I'm not happy about the falls."

"I shall be working by the walls, and they're all solid." He gave her a brief parting kiss. "Go back and enjoy the sunshine."

"I will go first," Albrecht said. "Then I can help you at the bottom of the chimney."

They made their way back to the entrance. Albrecht slid backwards into the river. "If you do not mind, I think it will be best if I carry you. If we both keep our heads bent, I do not think there will be any difficulty."

Cynthia lowered herself on to his

back and he bent his head so that she could rest her own head forward. When he stepped out into the stream, she realized at once that he was stronger and fitter than he looked. He waded steadily and surely downstream, bending low where the roof dipped, and they were soon at the ledge beyond the landslip.

Albrecht asked her: "You had made plans as to what you would do this morning?"

"I thought I might go for a walk. It's such a lovely day."

"Do you play tennis, Cynthia?"

"A little."

"I, too, enjoy tennis. They have finished relaying the courts. You would not care to play there this morning?"

"I should love to," she told him.

Albrecht locked the gate behind them. "Up here. I have the car on the other side of the road."

"Will you drop me at the inn first? I must change."

They reached the car, a big Mercedes. As he settled himself into the driving seat, he said: "The young couple who are also staying at the inn—do you think they might wish to play?"

"I've no idea. I suppose they might."

"If they have not gone out, you can ask them. I should be honoured to have them join us. . . ."

ON Albrecht's suggestion, Cynthia introduced the Allens to him on first-name terms. They got into the back of the car, and it pulled smoothly away.

Peter Allen said to Albrecht: "When I was in the army I was billeted at your house. I'm afraid you must have found things in a shocking mess."

"No. Less bad than I had expected. I was glad to find four walls, and a roof."

"We had a shot at getting the swimming pool and the tennis courts back into shape," Peter said reminiscently.

"Yes. My steward discovered two Louis Quinze chairs in the pavilion."

"Good God! Were they? I remember those chairs."

Albrecht eased the Mercedes through the entrance to the Schloss grounds. "An over-rated school of furniture," he commented. "If only our insurance brokers had survived the war, I should have welcomed their destruction."

The tennis courts were some distance from the main buildings, with the swimming pool almost adjacent. They played two sets of mixed doubles. When Heather suggested a third, Albrecht declined.

"I hope you will excuse me. I am past the age at which it is not important to conserve the energies."

Cynthia said to Heather: "Then you two can play singles." She smiled at Albrecht. "I'm past the age too."

"That is absurd," Albrecht said, "but I shall be glad to have you as a partner in resting."

He ordered drinks by telephone, and then came and sat beside Cynthia to watch the others. Heather's tennis was of a desperate character; she chased from side to side of the court retrieving her husband's well placed shots.

"Are they not charming?" Albrecht said. "Surely, of all the delights that the mingling of the sexes can give, there is none to compare with that of the newly wed."

"You have never married?"

"No. I have never married."

She asked him: "Your family have lived here for hundreds of years; don't you wish to have sons and grandsons living here after you?"

He said soberly: "The illusion of that desire tormented me for longer than a year, during the time I was a prisoner. It was the fifth year, I think. Most of those who had been prisoners

Albrecht stood up unexpectedly. "Come!" he said. "Allow me to show you something of the park"



with me had been sent back to their countries. It was then that I began to think I would die in Russia—from old age, if in no other way. And the worst agony was thinking that there would be no more von Frohnbergs here in Frohnberg."

"Why do you say 'illusion of desire'?"

"What else was it? It passed, and passed so completely that now, when there might be a hope of satisfaction, it does not return."

She said nothing to that and there was silence for some moments. Then Albrecht unexpectedly stood up. He extended a hand towards her. "Come! Allow me to show you something of the park."

She had half risen before the thought of refusal crossed her mind. She said, her voice made formal by uncertainty: "Thank you. I'd be glad to see it."

Albrecht led her through the pavilion and they came out beside the swimming pool. He touched her elbow to guide her through the shrubbery into the parkland which made up the greater part of the grounds. He led her towards a small round brick structure topped by

a high pinnacle of blue slates. There was a leaded window in the part of the wall nearest to them.

Much of the building was sunk below ground level. To one side there was a short flight of stone steps leading down. She followed Albrecht. A heavy wooden door was secured by an iron ring; he turned this and the door swung open.

She looked inside and drew back in the same instant. The interior, like that of a very small chapel, was full of a jumble of bones. Almost at her feet a skull rested, staring upwards out of blind sockets.

She shook her head. "I don't understand. What are they doing here?"

"They are here by right," Albrecht said gently. "This is their home, as Frohnberg was when they were alive. They died and were buried, and when their flesh had quite rotted away their bones were brought here, to rest until the Day of Wrath."

"But surely not like that—just scattered on the floor?"

"Indeed, no. Not in Austria. One supposes that the soldiers thought

there might be gold hidden among them."

He closed the door to the vault. She stood, waiting for him to lead the way back up the steps. Instead he put his hands on her shoulders and pulled her towards him.

As he kissed her she remained quite still. He stepped back after a moment. She asked: "Why did you do that?"

"Because I wanted to do it. You are a lovely woman, of much charm."

Shock began to turn to anger. "Did you expect me to respond?"

"Believe me, gracious lady, I expected nothing. Expectation is another part of illusion, and I have none left. Shall we go up, into the sunlight?"

They walked together in silence through the trees and the sun-speckled grass. This was not the first time, since she had married Henry, that it had been necessary to stop a man making love to her, but always with the others her refusal had created an awkwardness that could only be dispelled by the man leaving, or by others arriving. There was no such awkwardness now.

She put the question to herself, as to

whether she would tell Henry what had happened. She always had done with the others. Now she let the question rest, unanswered. . . .

Back at the inn that evening, Henry and Peter were downstairs in the big parlour, drinking beer. The two women had gone up to freshen themselves before dinner, and now sat talking in the Allens' bedroom.

Heather, sitting in front of the dressing table, stretched her arms and groaned.

"I am an idiot. Peter didn't want to play that last set but I insisted. I shall be stiff as a board for days." Inconsequently, she added: "Albrecht is nice. Don't you think so?"

"Provided he doesn't get you on your own."

Cynthia was disgusted with herself as soon as the words were out. She realized that they had been prompted by a whim to impress the younger woman.

Heather said excitedly: "No! Is he like that? What happened? Do tell."

"Nothing much."

"It must have been when he took you off in the park while we were playing tennis. Darling, you must tell! I'll get such a fevered imagination about it if you don't."

"I've told you—it wasn't much. He tried to kiss me."

"What a lovely bit of gruel! Did you slap his face, or bite him, or something?"

Cynthia shook her head. "I didn't do a thing. With anything short of a maniac, doing nothing is the most effective thing you can do."

"Is it? He let you go?"

"Yes."

"Are you going to tell Henry?"

"I haven't made up my mind yet."

"What did you do other times?"

"What other times?"

"When you were learning about nothing being the best thing to do."

"I told him."

"Well?"

"He wasn't enjoying himself caving on the land of the person concerned. There's a difference."

Heather glanced at her watch. She said: "Look at the time! They'll be furious with us." She slipped her arm through Cynthia's as they moved towards the door. "You do think he's nice, though, don't you?"

"Albrecht? Of course. He would make some lucky girl a very good father."

"Darling! It's just that he's mature."

CYNTHIA did not tell her husband what had happened. She knew it was not something she could reveal easily, casually, in the way she had treated similar incidents in the past.

In the days that followed—brilliantly sunny days—she visited Albrecht's home frequently, always in company with the Allens. There was no change that she could discern in Albrecht's manner. They played tennis, swam, rode in the park; often, in the evenings, they all dined at the Schloss and afterwards danced or played cards.

With one part of her mind Cynthia realized that she was falling in love, but she felt powerless to do anything decisive about it. The holiday would be over soon, the long lazy hours in the sun would end, and she would return to England with Henry. She told herself that nothing could happen. There was no danger. . . .

Albrecht had the habit of spending the early morning in the harvest fields, then joining the Allens and Cynthia at the swimming pool. One morning he arrived later than usual and made them his little courtly bow.

"Do you wish," he asked, "to have more practice in horse-riding?"

Heather shuddered. "I'm still sore from the last time."

"The horses should be exercised," Albrecht said.

Peter said: "I feel lazy. I think I'll stay with Heather."

Albrecht looked at Cynthia. "So we must exercise them," he said. "You do not mind this?"

She felt her throat constrict. "No. I enjoy riding."

They walked round the side of the

house towards the stables, neither speaking. The horses, Cynthia found, were ready saddled; he must have given instructions for that before coming out to the pool.

He helped her to mount before taking the dapple-grey from the groom. Then, still without a word, they were cantering together through the trees.

After a time their pace dropped to a trot, and then to a walk. They came to a halt in the lee of an overhang of rock. They dismounted, and Albrecht tethered the two horses to a sapling.

Cynthia said: "One would have to be as ignorant of such things as Heather to believe you would leave their exercising to the chance of an opportunity turning up during the day."

Albrecht stood beside her, his arm almost touching her shoulder. He said: "I think you are right, perhaps."

She looked at the profile of his face in the sunlight. At that moment the deeply drawn lines seemed to be smoothed out, and it was the face of a young man.

She asked impulsively: "How old are you, Albrecht?"

He turned to her with a slight smile. "On my last birthday I was thirty-six."

She said in surprise: "Then—you're younger than I am."

"Do years count? You are a young woman; and I, as you see, am an old man."

"Poor Albrecht."

"No. I am very lucky. I have everything I want. Youth is something I do not want."

"But what do you want?"

He paused; quite a long pause. Looking at him, she saw his gaze fixed outwards, on the river and distant star-rimmed hills.

"I want to be sure," he said at last, "that there is nothing I want."

She laughed. "How long will it take you to find that out?" Then the laughter died out of her voice and she went on, quickly and unevenly: "No. Don't say anything. I don't want you to answer that."

Quite suddenly she was in his arms. She felt the firmness of his body against her own, the unexpected, bruising hardness of his lips. . . .

THE next day was dull. There was a sharp shower of rain late in the morning, and another while Cynthia and the Allens were having lunch with Albrecht at the Schloss. There was a more or less constant rumble of thunder in the surrounding hills.

Henry was at the caves, and the Allens were going to join him there. Heather, like Cynthia, was dressed in a sweater-and-slacks outfit, in roughly the same fashion as the two men, who were sitting in the front seat of the Mercedes.

"Not a bad idea being under cover on a day like this," Heather said.

Albrecht pulled the car over on to the verge. "A mountain is a leaky umbrella," he told her. "If there is rain, it may drip through."

Henry was waiting, and waved to them from the other side of the road. They went across to join him, carrying rubber wading boots. Cynthia had her own, and Albrecht had been able to find a pair for Peter as well as himself. He had discussed the possibility of getting a pair from Graz for Heather, but she had explained that she would prefer to have Peter carry her through any streams that required fording. She was wearing flat shoes.

Albrecht said to Henry: "I could have brought you back to have luncheon with us. It would have been more sensible."

"I'm used to snacks at midday," Henry said. "It gives me a better appetite for dinner."

They were under the cave mouth. Henry said: "The usual warning: no shouting—don't talk any more loudly than is necessary."

"Or else the roof falls in," Heather said.

Cynthia allowed Peter, with Heather on his back, to go in front of her, following Henry. She touched Albrecht's hand as they moved ahead into the darkness.

Albrecht said: "It will be easier if

CHALLENGE THE FAMOUS

CHRIS BRASHER

(Olympic Gold Medallist) answered six questions on SPORT. Pit your wits against his and try to beat his points score.

(Answers on page 32)



1	What are the five classic races in the Racing Calendar?	The Derby, The Oaks, The St. Leger, the 2,000 Guineas and the 1,000 Guineas.
2	On a football field, how far distant from the goal line is the penalty spot?	I will have to make a guess at this. Twenty-two yards.
3	What is the fastest recorded tennis service?	I think it is about 120 m.p.h. by Pancho Gonzales.
4	How tall is a cricket stump and how wide is the wicket?	A stump, I think, is thirty inches above the ground and the wicket is nine inches wide.
5	In which sport do England, Scotland and Wales compete for the Bologna Trophy?	Swimming . . . I think.
6	Race horses are measured in hands. How high is a hand?	Four and a half inches.

I carry you also. The river is running deep here."

"Yes, please."

She bent her head down as he carried her, and pressed her lips against his neck. The others were splashing along in front of them.

They climbed through into the first cave, where the others were waiting, and set off up the slope. Rubble scattered underfoot.

Heather squealed suddenly. The beams from the two torches converged to cover her.

Peter said: "What's the matter?"

"Water," Heather said indignantly. "It dripped down the back of my neck."

Henry said, "It will be worse farther on, you know."

"It was the shock," she explained.

"You shouldn't let it provoke you into anything sudden—movements or cries." He added more sternly: "Otherwise we shall have to abandon the whole thing."

The light on his helmet was still on her, since he was facing in her direction. She stood there, blinking.

"I'll be good the rest of the way. I promise."

The beam of light swung away as Henry directed his attention towards the wooden ladder and the chimney. They saw him wriggle out of sight.

"You next," Peter said. "And don't scream if you see a mouse coming the other way."

Heather stared at him in horror. "Oh, heavens!"

She mounted the ladder, with Peter close behind her. Albrecht held the light on them until they had gone. Then he said to Cynthia: "Now it is our turn."

"Give them time to wriggle through." She reached up and kissed him. "I am shameless, you know. Don't worry. I rubbed my lipstick off as soon as we got inside the cave."

He said: "I am glad you are shameless."

With his arms round her, the light from his torch stabbed high over their heads towards the pointed arch of the ceiling. He said softly: "We must go, Cynthia." He always had a little difficulty with the *th*. "Let me help you."

In the painted cave, Henry collected them around him. "The rest of the

way is strange territory for all of you," he said. "I'll try to explain it in advance. You see how this cave slopes down towards the noise of the river? There's a crevice at the bottom which we have to get through."

Peter asked: "Big enough for Heather?"

There was a loudly whispered exclamation. "Brute!"

"That part's easy," Henry said.

"It's about four feet wide, and there's a drop of about six feet. You drop on to another ledge running beside the Frohn. The tricky part is from there on. In places the ledge is very narrow."

He paused, and then added: "Finally, there's the fact of the wall being shaky. I'll warn you when we get to the particularly bad spots. But I'd

REPENTANCE—I

In all my life I have never repented but of three things: that I trusted a woman with a secret, that I went by sea when I might have gone by land, and that I passed a day in idleness.

Marcus Cato

like to repeat the general warning: no unnecessary noise, and all movements as gentle as possible. You all understand?"

Heather said indignantly: "Henry!"

Henry said: "The warning is meant for everybody."

"But you looked at me; and your look's got a great dazzling searchlight a couple of inches above it."

They saw him smile in the light from Albrecht's torch. "Anyway, as long as it's understood, it doesn't matter. Now we can get on with it."

They set off down the slope, and Cynthia felt Albrecht's arm supporting her. The noise of the underground water grew steadily louder.

Cynthia's nerves were jarred by the continuous roar of water. As she reached the ledge, a stone rolled under her foot, and she began to fall forward. Albrecht caught her.

Her slip precipitated a general movement in the loose rubble. They found

themselves lit up as Henry turned round to look in their direction.

"What's the matter?" he called.

Albrecht replied: "Cynthia slipped. She is all right."

"We must go carefully," Henry said.

"Any slip could be serious." Darkness came round them again as he turned away. Cynthia whispered savagely: "Does he think I slipped on purpose?"

"You are all right, are you not?" Albrecht asked her. "You did not hurt your ankle?"

"Kiss me," she told him. "Then I will be all right."

They embraced briefly before setting out along the ledge. At intervals, instructions came from Henry: "This is where the ledge narrows . . . the wall's shaky for the next ten or fifteen yards. . . ."

She walked just in front of Albrecht, and the light from his torch was mainly thrown on the tumbling river beside the ledge. It was a surprise when she emerged, quite unexpectedly, into the diffuse light of Henry's headlamp. He was standing, with Heather and Peter beside him, in the centre of a cave shaped something like a squat bottle.

Henry said: "Here we are."

"Is this all?" Heather asked.

For reply, Henry directed his light over the top of the cave. Suddenly colour flashed from a thousand reflecting surfaces, a million needle points—milky white, red, harsh green and black. The whole of the wall was a mass of sharp-edged, petrified blossom.

Heather gasped in wonder. "What are they?"

"Gypsum flowers. Just a mineral deposit."

"Can we pluck them?"

"I'll try and get a bit off for you before we go back. They look like flowers, don't they?"

Albrecht said: "And this is the farthest point?"

"The farthest so far. There's a possible way that may go deeper." He turned his head, and the light swung round the cave. "I've brought a certain amount of gear in and I'd like to have a try before I go back. Come over and I'll show you."

Heather said: "I think I would rather look at the flowers. Peter will stay here with me."

"Leave me your torch," Peter said to Albrecht. "You can go by Henry's for the time being."

Cynthia went with Albrecht and Henry. They crossed to the point farthest from the river, where a heap of rubble lay against the wall. A store of equipment had been neatly laid out alongside it. Henry's light shone up the rubble pile towards the wall.

"See that?"

"It is a hole?" Albrecht asked.

"Surely, a very small one."

"About six inches across, but I think it can be enlarged—the edges are friable. I find that. . . ."

There was a sound from the other side of the cave, and Henry swung round quickly. His headlamp illumined Heather and Peter. Heather was holding Albrecht's torch; Peter was climbing the wall beside the tunnel mouth, his feet struggling for purchase against the rock.

Henry's voice was pitched low, but unmistakably urgent. "Get off that wall!"

"It's all right," Heather said. "He's just getting me that big red tulip."

"For God's sake, not that wall! Peter! Come down!"

Peter's voice, muffled and echoing said: "Right-ho."

They saw him feeling for a descent and, in the same instant, saw the wall crack and shatter above his head. Heather screamed, but her scream was buried in the ripening thunder of stone as the wall burst inwards.

It took several seconds for the noise to die away; and for them to realize that Heather was still screaming.

To be continued next week

"The Caves Of Night" will be published as a book on June 19 by Eyre and Spottiswoode, price 13s. 6d.

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I am ordered to spy on the King

by ERIKA LEUCHTAG



To reach Nepal Erika crossed the Himalayas by sedan chair, and rested frequently. The Nepalis sent a special chair for her spaniel Peepchen



The King with his wives. Erika nicknamed the Senior Queen (centre) Birdy and her sister Dreamy. Later the King used the names himself

He was a pitiful captive and I vowed to free him. Now came this wicked edict. If I obeyed it how could I face him again?

ALMOST every morning a bearer trotted up my pathway with a cinnamon-coloured note: *Miss Erika please come to the King's palace today at 5 p.m.* Sometimes no note came at all until the evening, when I was dressed to leave, and this might say: *Miss Erika please do not come today, so come at 6 p.m. tomorrow.*

No reason was ever given for the cancellation of an appointment, for no reason was ever given for anything that happened at the palace. All day I would wait with nerves and emotions tight, and if a visit was postponed the collapse of the tension was worse than the enduring of it.

That I should be treated in this strange way did not worry me unduly, however; already I had seen much in Nepal that was strange. A few weeks previously in March, 1949, I had become one of the few Europeans in this beautiful, flower-scented land. I had come over the high mountains from India to Katmandu, the capital of Nepal, to give massage treatment to the Senior Queen, Kanti Raja Lakshmi.

To my surprise the tall, athletic-looking King Tribhuvana had welcomed me into his family circle. I had taught him to dance to Western music. And as the days passed and my friendship with the King flourished I gradually learned his secret—the reason for the sad expression which so often clouded his face.

I found that, despite the magnificence of his palace, he was a prisoner, and that the real ruler was the Prime Minister, Mohun Shamsher Jang Bahadur Rana. He lived in Singha Durbar, a palace even more luxurious than the King's.

Slowly I discovered how this had come about. A century ago, the King told me, a noble named Jang Bahadur Rana had seized power and made himself hereditary Prime Minister. Rana succeeded Rana in this office, the title passing from brother to brother, or from father to sons.

There grew up a complex dynasty, legitimate and illegitimate, that graded itself in precedence and privilege. There were A, B and C Ranas, the A Ranas being the sons and daughters of the Prime Minister and his senior consort. The B Ranas were the children of his second Maharani, and the C Ranas of his concubines. There was no aristocracy but Ranas. Only an

A Rana could become Prime Minister, the others finding their fortunes in military or civil affairs.

The belief that the King was the titular head of the country was thinly observed. Foreign decorations and honours, sent by convention from other nations, were in fact pinned to the already overburdened chest of the Prime Minister. The throne was maintained only because, to the Nepalis, the King was a deity. His titles were hollow, having no substance. The King was *Mahipati*, Lord of the Land. He was *Narpati*, Lord of Men. He was *Deva*, a god who could be and often was publicly worshipped. But he was also a prisoner of the Ranas.

What Tribhuvana himself told me, about the Ranas and his country, came haltingly, and only as his early distrust of my presence faded. Never before had he been allowed to talk to a European alone, never had a European been allowed within his private palace unescorted by a Rana.

Yet he did tell me much. One day I spoke of some postmen I had seen on my way to the valley, half-naked brown men, with bells ringing on their anklets. I said how charmed I had been by the sight and the sound of them. He smiled and took my hand, tolerantly, as with an innocent child.

"Do you know why these *dak*-runners are belled, Erika? So that men may hear them and know they are running. If the bells are silent this must be reported by whoever notices it. Then the postmen are punished. They are tied together, trussed like poultry, their arms behind their backs and their legs bent to their wrists. Ropes are tied across their mouths to gag them. They are left in the sun on rough rocks for a day, or two days, perhaps more, until they are bleeding and swollen. Then, perhaps, they may be rolled down the mountainside."

"It is not possible," I said.

"Such things are possible, Erika. Not long before you came here, a man was executed because he listened to Gandhi on the radio."

I said: "Surely men cannot be executed without the King's seal. Why do you not refuse?"

"There is a royal seal," he said, "but it is locked in the Prime Minister's desk."

Imprisoning Tribhuvana within his Happy Cottage was not enough for the Ranas. They



When the King's public appearance was essential he was allowed to leave his palace. He welcomed eminent visitors from the Durbar Hall throne

built about him a more subtle cage of slander. By lies they destroyed any instinctive sympathy or curiosity that foreigners might feel. To the people of the British Embassy he was a name, a nonentity, a pale figure in a white sharkskin uniform, standing at his throne for official durbars, saying only what had been written for him, and then hurrying away to enjoy the private vices which the Ranas, with winks and shrugging shoulders, said were his only interest.

Chance—the Prime Minister's conviction that I was a frivolous and stupid woman—made me the first European to discover the truth. The debauchee was, in fact, a muscular man who had learned judo in his youth, who could ride two horses at the gallop with one foot on each, who could play most sports superlatively well.

As the days passed I saw him as a man ready and waiting, a desperate man and a bitter man, yet keeping despair and bitterness in patient check.

The King's own country, Nepal, the Cherished of God, which his ancestors had conquered, was almost completely unknown to him. Far more real were the department-store catalogues which he had delivered to him from India, France, Britain, Japan and America, and from which he learned much of the outside world.

From childhood onwards, from the death of his father, from the time a great skull-cap of gold had been placed on his head at his coronation, he had been surrounded by women—by his mother, by his father's concubines, by his own wives, daughters and ladies-in-waiting. His sons had been taken from him, educated by the Ranas and married to Rana princesses.

He would, I found, endure the Happy Cottage for days or weeks and then, unable to stand it any longer, humbly ask permission to drive his car through Katmandu. With a Rana general beside him, he drove his beige Mercury quickly, but with great skill. Once I asked him why he went abroad without a protective escort. Was it not dangerous?

"Erika," he said. "Who would wish to kill me?"

But he was not as safe as that, and once he had been very afraid. When he told me about it, he gave no details, but I deduced that it had happened some years before my coming. There had been a minor revolt of disgruntled C Ranas in which the Prime Minister believed the King to be implicated. All day he and his sons waited, expecting to be shot at any moment.

"But they let us live," he said. . . .

I felt compelled to help the King—but how? The Prime Minister's control seemed complete. Even the notes about whether or not I was to go

to the palace were signed by Sardar Pushpa Raj, an elderly, melancholy Nepali at Singha Durbar in charge of the King's secretariat. He was a Rana man, of course, and a copy of everything he wrote was placed before the Prime Minister.

Almost every evening I went to the King's palace—called the Happy Cottage—and learned more of these pale prisoners, and each time I loved them more. I gave the Senior Queen her treatment with great care, for her skin bruised easily. Sometimes I treated the King, too, for although his body was strong it was wasting now, as a tiger will waste when caged.

When the treatment was over for the evening the King and I danced on the black and white marble of the hall, for two, three and sometimes four hours. Soon, too, I began to give lessons to the Senior Queen, and to her sister, the Junior Queen, Ishwari Reja Lakshmi, and the three princesses, Nalani, Vijaya and Bharati. I have never known more modest people than the two gentle women to whom the King was married.

Between all three there was an oddly sensitive understanding, a mutual experience of all sensations. The King made no distinction between the sisters. They were not two women to him, but one, Lakshmi, his consort. His children, also, looked on both queens as one parent, calling each *Muma-ji*—Mother—whether she was or not.

Yet to my eye there was a difference between the King's wives, and I called them by pet names that marked the difference. The Senior Queen I called Birdy, because of her bright eyes; the Junior Queen was Dreamy because of her sad contemplative look.

Within a few days the King was referring to them by these names. Dreamy had beautiful hands, long, slender and wax-like, so beautiful that when I met her I would say: "*Namashkar*, I greet the divine in you," and kiss them.

THE King also made no distinction in favour and treatment between his daughters. They, too, dressed alike, in the same materials, the same colours. Their voices were pitched on a high note, yet on their father's orders, whispered, and there were times when I longed for one of them to try the full strength of her voice.

Once, in desperation, I caught Vijaya about the waist, lifted her light body from the floor and thumped it down suddenly. She squealed, and I cried triumphantly: "Hah, I see you have a voice after all."

Every night when I left the palace, passing through the gardens to where my car waited at the foot of the steps, I received a present from the King or the queens.

The presents were fabulous or frivolous. One

evening it might be a single giant carnation, the next a watch, a simple notebook, or a diamond clip, a bracelet, or underwear, silk stockings, a golden fountain pen, a cigarette case, a cigarette lighter. When I received the lighter I said: "But, Your Majesty, I have one. You asked to see it yesterday."

"You change your clothes frequently," he said. "Why not change your lighter also?"

For a long time he continued to call me "Madam," a form of address so cold, and so much in contradiction to the warmth of affection with which they all surrounded me, that I longed to ask them to call me by my name. But I could not find the opportunity until one evening he suddenly stood up and said: "You are a friend of the family now. I would like you to have my visiting card."

He glanced at the Junior Queen, and she rose with a delighted smile, rustled through the door, and returned shortly with a golden *mohur*—a thick coin as large as a five-shilling piece. The King held it in the air between finger and thumb, and turned it so that the light gleamed on it. He read the characters about its edge, softly, his voice an odd mixture of pride and bitterness.

He placed it in my open hand. "I make you an honorary member of the royal family of Nepal."

I touched his feet in *namashkar*.

The next day I brought him my own visiting card, white pasteboard with my name engraved, and on it I wrote: "For gold I give paper and will prove—sooner or later—that loyal I am to you." I asked that he call me Erika.

IN Singha Durbar where the Ranas governed I had not been forgotten. Presents of cigarettes arrived from the Prime Minister daily, and I had sense enough now, sufficient awareness of the situation and my potential danger, to thank him with letters of diplomatic politeness and flattery. Now that I knew more about him and his régime I could not look at him, at the sports festival or at official durbars, without a mixture of revulsion and anger. I don't know whether it was I or the King who nicknamed him Goebbels.

His son General Bijaya, the Foreign Minister, I genuinely liked. I respected his sharp, inquisitive mind and his chivalrous nature.

I had not been long in Tripureswar, the guest-house which was my home, before the guesthouse keeper Mani Ram came to me. He said that at the express order of His Highness General Bijaya—Mani Ram almost bent his forehead to the floor when uttering the name—he was asking whether I had everything I desired. I said that I would like something to drink in the evenings.

"There is prohibition in Nepal, madam," said Mani Ram.

I said that I knew this, but he had asked. That evening a bottle of brandy and a bottle of whisky were delivered to me with "the compliments of Major-General Bijaya Shamsher Jang Bahadur Rana, Director-General of Foreign Affairs."

If such a gesture showed the instinctive warmth of Bijaya, I soon discovered the iron beneath. Dr. Siddhimani, the Court Physician, called one morning, and when he had found the courage he began to explain that Singha Durbar desired a monthly report from me giving details of the Queen's health, the treatment she was receiving, and also details of whatever treatment I might be giving the King and other members of the royal family. Should my time at the palace be passed in any other way, perhaps I would inform Singha Durbar of this also.

I refused angrily. I said that it was not

my custom, not professional etiquette to do such a thing.

"Madam," said the doctor, "this is the Prime Minister's order."

"I understand that, Doctor Sahib, but it makes no difference."

Within the hour, almost, I was summoned to Singha Durbar, a car calling for me. In a large office on the first floor of the palace, a room of dark brown wood and deep leather chairs, like an old-fashioned smoking-room, Bijaya was waiting behind his desk. His face was cold, the pencil-line of his thin moustache straightened by his compressed lips. He listened impatiently to my refusal to submit the reports he desired. Then he put his hands heavily on the desk. "Madam, understand that the royal family of Nepal is not covered by your ethical standards. I order you to submit the reports."

I returned to the guest-house angry and depressed that I should be made part of the intelligence system that spied on the King. I typed the report, but by heading it **STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL** retained part of my self-respect.

I felt compelled to tell the King what had happened. He smiled and shrugged. After so long and so much persecution by the Ranas this one thing could not surprise or anger him. He took my hand and patted it consolingly. . . .

In April came the Nepalese New Year. Through the squares and streets at dusk passed long processions, singing and chanting, pulling great decorated wooden cars that were sacred to Matsyendra, the Protector of Nepal. The air throbbed with drums or vibrated with the reedy calling of flutes.

All the royal family waited for me in the cocktail-room. The women had presents in their hands, wrapped in paper that glittered with silver and golden threads. They gathered about me and thrust them into my hands—a golden fountain-pen, a cigarette-holder of coral and gold, a key-ring with a silver *mohur* attached. They brought me money—Nepalese notes that bore portraits of the King, his profile in pale, watered blue, a great bird of paradise plume in his helmet.

I flung my arms about the queens and the princesses, and the King put out his own arms, and said: "Well, why not me too?" We embraced, to the right and to the left.

One day, shortly before this, the King placed another present in my hand, a small parcel beautifully tied with coloured ribbons, lapping and overlapping each other in rainbow hues. Attached to it was one of the great cool carnations from the garden. I could not open the present, it looked so beautiful, and it rested on the table before me for the rest of the evening.

Even when I got home I could not open the present. Ghorki Ram, my personal servant, took off my shoes, I undressed, and still the present lay on my dressing-table, the scent of the carnation filling the room. At last I was too curious. I took away the flower and untied the ribbons. Beneath the wrapping I found yet more ribbons and more paper. These I removed, and found more, and still more, until at the end was revealed an ordinary cigarette tin, light and empty with the seal broken.

I took off the lid. There was nothing inside but a note in the King's handwriting.

"April the First, you little fool!"

The mornings and afternoons of each day were my own. I rose early each morning, at six o'clock, when Ghorki came with my tea. Then I would smoke a cigarette, exercise myself, and walk into the garden with Peepchen, my pet spaniel, to pick fresh flowers. The gardener would be waiting for me, with a rose in his hand. This became his invariable custom after the first day, when I rewarded the gesture with a half-rupee. The rose he gave me each morning was rich and almost blown, a small explosion of pink, or red, white or yellow. This was not because he was jealous of his flowers and had no wish to bring me anything but one already dying. It is an Indian custom that when a rose is given it should not be the crisp, dewy bud that would be a European's gift, but a flower fully blown.

The Nepalis believe that every grain

of soil in their land is holy, each twig, stone and leaf a divine manifestation. Buddhist, Hindu and Tibetan temples are sprinkled liberally among the trees, cities and villages, slender spires and pumpkin cupolas. At sunrise I saw them sparkling one by one, like newly lit fires. All day their bells rang, and all day the roads were full of men and women walking to and from them.

I went often into Katmandu, to the old bazaar, which is a great square. The shops where I lingered were open, black gaps in the pink and white walls, with merchants sitting out of the sun, cross-legged behind mounds of rice, green and red peppers, tiny brown eggs, and oranges, bananas and aubergines. In some shops there were long lines of glass jars, filled with sticky English sweets. Ducks, geese, goats and sacred cows walked unmolested about the money-changers' tables in the centre of the square.

I took my camera into the bazaar, and one day climbed the stairs of a corner house, seeking a window where I might best catch the whole teeming view below. I had no time to focus the camera before the room was filled with excited, hysterical Nepalis, men and women, screaming at me, driving me from the house into the street. It took me many rupees to placate them, and them many days of sweeping, scrubbing and whitewashing to cleanse their house of my defiling presence.

Northwards from Katmandu is Pashupatinath in a gorge, in a forest from which palm trees stand up unexpectedly like feather dusters. There I found a jewel-box of Hindu temples, spilling down the slopes to the yellow Bagmati river and the burning *ghats*.

Pashupatinath is a place built for death. Shrines fixed in the cliff walls and wide terraces of white stone rise up to the great temple. Roofs are scarlet with tiles, held aloft by timbers carved into writhing images of procreation, birth and death. The temple's spires and towers gleam with gold.

I found Buddhist shrines there too, but Pashupatinath is predominantly a holy centre to the Hindu. This is where he washes his sins away, and where his dead body is burned.

I knew that the temples were forbidden to Westerners, but as I walked back to my car that day I had forgotten this fact. I happened to see the golden gates of a little temple and hurried to them, instinctively wishing to pass through. Before the waving arms of a gatekeeper took me, and forced me away, I saw a wondrous image of silver beyond the gates, burning coldly in the darkness, its feet vividly scattered with marigolds.

Not only the gatekeeper was angry with me. A crowd gathered, men with faces distorted by hate and anger. The gentle Nepali people whom I loved had suddenly turned fierce and murderous. They surrounded me, shouting, and only because Ghorki Ram took my arm, and forced a passage for me to the car, did I escape injury.

That was not the end of it. Bijaya called me to Singha Durbar the next day, and looked at me gravely across his big desk, warning me never to attempt such a foolish thing again.

I WENT again to Pashupatinath after that, but this time I was careful to ask the gatekeepers where I might go and where I might not. Once, refused entry to a courtyard—although Ghorki and Peepchen were allowed to pass through—I saw the vast hindquarters of a golden bull, immense in flank, belly and virility, standing on a carpet of flowers.

When I told the King that I had been to Pashupatinath, and said how terribly moved I had been by the sight of the burning *ghats*, and the funeral pyres smoking there, an expression of great melancholy came over his face. Six years later he and Pashupatinath were to become so linked in my mind that I cannot, even now, think of it without sadness.

To say that I ever completely understood this king would be an overstatement. Deliberately he chose to be an enigma. Understanding was something he seemed to fear, and was consequently something he avoided. His imprisonment by the Ranarchy developed in him

MY OWN BOSS

How we



Tom Bennett and his wife Jean behind the bar in Ye Olde Sun Inn at St. Neots, Huntingdonshire. Tom threw up his steady job to become a publican. It was worth it, he says

a pride that made it impossible for him to show that he was hurt by it.

I would have understood him better had his ambition been to be a despot like his ancestor, Prithwi Narayin. Instead, he saw himself as a constitutional monarch one day, a projection of George VI in the mountains of Nepal.

Sensitive to an extreme degree, he resented any foreign picture of him as an ignorant and feudal prince. This explained his passion for things Western, a passion that existed coincidentally with his contempt for much of Western morals.

He was a master photographer who was not only an artist but who was superb in the laboratory as well. With cars he was a mechanic as well as a driver. He filled the Happy Cottage with electrical appliances, ordering Sardar Pushpa Raj to buy still more and more lamps, fires, hair-driers and clocks in good—and deplorable—taste. They were not ornaments to him; he was forever taking them apart and re-assembling them.

Nevertheless, although he was progressive, he was a devout Hindu, sharing his people's beliefs. No snake may be killed in the Valley of Katmandu, for this is a sin punished by childlessness or leprosy, but when one day I found a cobra in the grounds of the Happy Cottage, I felt sure that he would destroy it.

The princesses and I were together, and we came upon the snake suddenly, as it curled its great length from the flowers. The princesses ran toward the palace, screaming, fear making them forget their father's orders to speak only in whispers.

The King, when he was told, would not have the cobra found and destroyed. Instead, he had all his shrubs and flowers in that part of the garden cut down to the earth, so that there might be no shelter for the snake and it could depart unmolested. For days I walked cautiously in the gardens. . . .

May came, and the scent of yellow and white jasmine pervaded the garden. The crimson roses hung in the dusk like

tiny lanterns, and the King and I began to spend more time alone together.

Sometimes he would sit by me silently on the swing-hammock, holding my hand and watching me. He still marvelled at my presence there, the fact that the Ranas had permitted it. He liked me to talk about Europe, and when I told him of the Indian princes I had seen on the Riviera he ordered an atlas to be brought, and opened it upon our knees, his finger following mine along the Mediterranean coastline from Rapallo to Cannes. He repeated each name after me, wistfully, until I caught his fingers suddenly in mine and exclaimed: "One day we'll go there."

"One day," he said, "when I am free. . . ."

It was the first time we had spoken of freedom. We were very close to each other that day, sharing many thoughts and many emotions unexpressed.

I knew that in India there were forces in opposition to the Ranarchy—the Nepali Congress Party, disaffected Ranas and so on. I suspected, rightly as it was later proved, that the Indian Government would give no active sympathy or support to these forces unless it were convinced that within Nepal itself there was a centre of opposition to the Prime Minister, a potential alternative to the Ranarchy.

The King, as a constitutional monarch, was the only alternative, but the Indian Government would not consider him. Rana propaganda had presented him as a debauchee and lecher.

I felt that if somebody could get to India, and talk of the King's ambitions and hopes to the government in Delhi, it might be the greatest thing that had ever happened to Tribhuvana.

One morning, as I sat at my bedroom window, watching the sun creeping across my flowers, I realized that I was perhaps the one person who might effect this. My plan was so terribly simple that I wondered why I had not thought of it before.

My next *Strictly Confidential* report on the Senior Queen's treatment was

took over a pub

by TOM BENNETT

It took £1,100—and patience. . . . The first of an occasional series of articles on people who made their dreams come true

THE first problem that faced me two years ago when I became landlord of Ye Olde Sun Inn at St. Neots in Huntingdonshire was that there was no proper cellar. The barrels of beer were simply stored behind the bar.

I knew that temperature control was all-important in keeping beer in good condition, but I disliked the idea of having wet sacks over the barrels. It didn't seem very hygienic, although it is a recognized way of keeping beer cool.

So I put up a partition between the barrels and the bar, so that they were in a small room of their own with an electric fan. I borrowed an old car radiator from a customer, filled it with water and put it in front of the fan. In this way I managed to keep the beer at its correct temperature of fifty-eight degrees.

I had heard that the Sun was becoming vacant while on holiday at St. Neots, and decided to give up my £13 to £14 a week job with a photographic firm and strike out on my own.

It is no good applying direct to the brewers to

take over a house. All dealings must be through brewers' brokers—firms specializing in valuations and negotiations in the licensed trade.

I was not surprised when I was turned down as too young—I was twenty-eight—and too inexperienced. But a week later the brewers said that they would accept me if I would train for four weeks at one of their big houses.

When I went for training I was put straight behind a big bar on a busy Saturday night. It's a good, if hectic, way to learn.

My capital was £1,100. Brewers' indemnity cost £250 (this remains my money although lodged with them) and the goodwill, furniture and fittings of the Sun totalled £310. I paid £160 for the stock, and the round total with a few sundry expenses came to £800, leaving me with about £300 working capital.

The brewers were so impressed with my do-it-yourself temperature control that last year they installed a proper air-conditioning plant.

Cleanliness is just as important as temperature. I clean the pump pipes every day. Barrels of mild

beer have to be cleared—or "fined"—before they can be sold. Stuff called "finings," a translucent, jelly-like substance without taste or smell, is poured into a fresh barrel. In twenty-four hours all the dead yeast and sediment is forced out up a funnel in the bung-hole, where it is trapped.

It does not take long to get to know the best size casks to order so that they are not kept too long once started. I use firkins—nine gallons. I "fine" one a day, but prepare three on Fridays and two or three on Saturdays, according to how much has been sold.

We lost custom until I got the beer right. I was very proud when a man held up a glass and said: "This is the best pint I've had for a long time." We also lost trade through having only one kind of whisky. I soon stocked for several tastes. Our total stocks now average between £200 and £300.

Brewers allow fourteen days' credit, so we have to be careful not to overstock or we may have, say, bottled beer on hand for six weeks but have to pay for it in two.

The gross profit on draught beer is just under 3d. a pint; 7d. of the cost is duty. We sell about eight hundred pints a week, which earns us about £10. On bottled beer the profit is about 3d. and we sell twenty-five to thirty dozen a week. But all sales go down by about a third in winter. One night during our first winter we sat in front of the bar fire without a customer until 9.30 p.m.

We also sell about £20 worth of cigarettes a week, of which about 33s. is profit.

My wife and I draw £11 a week for housekeeping. In the first year we broke about even. I had slightly less in the bank than when we started, but our stocks were bigger and trade better.

At present I am only a little better off financially than I was as an employee. But the satisfaction of being my own boss cannot be reckoned in money.

THE END

now due, and in it I inserted the following paragraph:

"As the height of Her Majesty's blood pressure is not quite satisfactory, I had a consultation with Doctor Siddhimani to help get it down more quickly. I had to point out that my treatment is in no way connected with blood pressure, and so I asked the Doctor Sahib to take some medical steps to bring it down. I think the easiest way of settling the matter would be if the patient could be sent down from the height of 4,500 feet to a place of sea level—not India as it is too hot."

Not India, certainly; indeed, my thought was that Birdy might get away to Europe. But nobody could leave Nepal except by way of India, and the Senior Queen of Nepal could scarcely pass through India without being officially received by the Indian Government. Thus she could carry a message from the King to Pandit Nehru.

As I look back on it now it was a childish plan. I doubt whether Bijaya, or his father, gave the suggestion one serious thought, dismissing it as interference from a busy-bodying European. Perhaps Dr. Siddhimani suspected something more than this, and perhaps he was alarmed at being involved in it. He was very angry with me when I showed him the report, and became desperately worried when I refused to strike out the paragraph.

Singha Durbar, in any case, did nothing more than acknowledge the receipt of the report, and there the matter ended. I took a copy to the Happy Cottage and showed it to the King, and told him what I had hoped from it.

The King's appearance publicly was sometimes essential. When a French ambassador came to Katmandu, although his business would be conducted with the Ranas, his credentials had to be presented to the King. So there was an official reception in the old Durbar Hall of Katmandu, by the Hanuman Gate.

When I arrived at the great hall, instead of being taken upstairs to the

guest gallery, as I had expected, and where the women of the British, French and Indian embassies sat, I was shown into the body of the hall itself. I was given a chair in the middle of a row of stony-faced Rana generals. The room glowed with colour and brilliance. There was glitter of chandeliers above, the velvet and gold caps of Brahmins, the saffron of Buddhist robes, the scarlet, purple, ivory, yellow, green and blue of saris, the Most Refulgent Order of the Star of Nepal glittering on khaki chests.

Before me, alone on a wide throne of red velvet, sat the King. There was much coming and going before him of Brahmins, and to this he seemed to pay no attention, but looked beyond them to the end of the hall, appearing to see nothing. Then he arose, retired to a screen behind his throne and presently emerged wearing a breath-taking crown. This was a skull-cap of gold, encrusted with diamonds and emeralds. About its rim hung a fringe of more emeralds, great dew-drops of brilliant green, each the size of a man's thumb. In the centre of the cap glowed a blood-red ruby. Rising from the top and sweeping backward in a perfect arc was the snow-white plume of a bird of paradise.

This was the great crown of the kings of Nepal, and apparently so that there might not be any misunderstanding, the Prime Minister was wearing one exactly like it.

Monsieur Daniel Levy, the French Ambassador, came to the steps of the throne, flanked by Brahmins and Rana generals, and the King descended a step or two to meet him. A handkerchief was handed to the King. He sprinkled it with perfume, and passed it to the ambassador as a customary gift. The King spoke tonelessly in Nepali, and his words were translated. The ambassador's courteous reply was translated into Nepali, then he bowed and retired. The tradition that the King of Nepal should not be defiled by direct contact with a foreigner had been observed in the correct manner.

When the durbar was over, at four in

the afternoon, the King left the Durbar Hall, an escort of scarlet and green lancers clattering before and behind him, and I followed him rapidly in my car. I had begged him to stay in his white sharkskin uniform at least until I arrived, and when I reached the Happy Cottage he was waiting for me in it on his portico.

I asked him why he had not worn his crown all through the ceremony. He said nothing. He half-turned his head towards the door behind him, brought his hands together in a scarcely audible clap. There was the rustling movement of a sari, the bowing figure of a lady-in-waiting, and the gentlest of whispers from the King. The lady-in-waiting returned with a great wooden box. He took from it that magnificent crown, and the sun struck it dazzlingly. He passed his fingers softly through the white plume, and then said: "Make

REPENTANCE—2

Never to repent and never to reproach others, these are the first steps to wisdom.

Diderot

your fist, Erika, so." He held up his own hand before him, fist clenched.

I imitated it with my own hand, and he rested the crown upon it. The weight bore down my arm and the crown nearly rolled upon the floor.

"You see, the crown of Nepal is not light after all," he said. "Now, may I take off this uniform . . . ?"

The two months which had been the contracted length of my stay in Katmandu were over, but the treatment I was giving Birdy was not finished. I wanted to stay, she wanted me to stay, and the King wanted me to stay, but his wish alone was not enough.

I wrote to Bijaya without much

confidence, explaining that the treatment must continue. But, probably as a result of my own propaganda campaign, to the effect that I was bored at the palace and could see nothing in the King, he replied promptly, extending my stay for another three months, and, characteristically, demonstrating his pleasure with another gift of brandy and whisky. The Prime Minister, too, sent gifts, a basket of oranges and mangoes.

The more I thought of the King's sad position the more I became possessed by my emotions. In desperation I began to ask questions wherever I went to find out how strong was support for the King.

Ghorki Ram, astute little man, was more successful in this espionage, and he told me that men had said that the King ought to be a real king.

I carried this news to the palace, but the King, instead of being pleased, as I had expected, looked alarmed. "Dearest Erika," he said, "do you really want to eat a cucumber one day and find that it has been poisoned?"

But even this remark, with its reference to the Prime Minister's ultimate power, did not stop my efforts. I made contact with the British Embassy in Katmandu, hoping there to find some sympathy for the King.

The embassy was a fine English country house in magnificent grounds. It lay back behind green lawns and slumbering shrubs over which, on Sunday afternoons, came the pleasant plop of tennis balls and the tinkle of tea-cups. The men and women there were pleasant and courteous, but they knew nothing of the King, nor did they seem to care.

To the women, the King was a handsome white figure at durbars who was said to pass his time with an extensive harem. To the men, the realities of Nepalese politics were naturally more important than the hopes of the King. The Ranas ruled the country, the Ranas had come to the aid of the British Raj during the Great Mutiny, and so long as they remained friendly to Britain, how

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"If she must tag along she'll have to be a goal post"

they governed was unimportant. At least, that is how it seemed to me.

My attempt to get the Senior Queen out of the country by a recommendation in my medical report to Singha Durbar had been a miserable little failure. I next proposed that when I returned to India I should approach Pandit Nehru and tell him of the King's ambitions and his imprisonment.

The King received this suggestion indifferently. Perhaps he saw, as I did not see in my enthusiasm then, that it was highly unlikely that an insignificant physiotherapist from Simla would ever reach the Pandit-ji, or have her story believed if she did.

But the idea that I should myself take some positive action was a seed that began to germinate rapidly. When it flowered it was into a proposal so obvious and so reasonable that, for the first time, I saw hope in the King's face.

The idea came to me on the evening I dined at the Happy Cottage. Previously I had never, in all those weeks, eaten there anything more than tea—neat little sandwiches, English cakes and biscuits—but when the King discovered that I had never tasted Nepali food, he decided that I should have dinner with the royal family.

As requested in one of those brief little cinnamon-coloured notes, I arrived at the palace at half past six, dressed in a long sharkskin frock and wearing pearls and sapphires. The garden was brilliantly lit that evening, coloured lights hanging like stars among the sky of leaves. There was a table set by the lake, and the light winked on the cut-glass and filled decanters. We drank and talked softly, the King, the queens, the princesses and I, and then went upstairs to the cocktail room.

The top of the black glass table there was hidden beneath a cloth made of fresh flowers of every imaginable colour, petal upon petal cunningly arranged. In the centre rose a mountain of fruit in a golden bowl. At each place was set a golden dish.

The dinner was served by ladies-in-waiting—Muffle, Ball and Whiney, I had nicknamed them—and their dark, round faces dimpled with pleasure as they moved swiftly and silently behind us. The curries were Nepalese, hotter than any I had eaten in India, and when they were finished *pan* was brought to cleanse our tongues and breath.

I was familiar enough with *pan* in India—parings of lime and areca nut wrapped in a fragment of betel leaf. But this was *pan* I had never seen before; a green fresh leaf smeared with lime, folded into an envelope of the thinnest gold leaf. It was so thin that it dissolved fragrantly in my mouth.

After the meal we danced into the quiet, suspended hours of the early morning, until the King put his hands together and said: "May I go now, please?"

He walked down the staircase with

me to the hall—something he did rarely—and when we were alone there for a moment I told him what I intended to do. "I am going to ask Surjit Singh to help you," I said.

Sardur Surjit Singh Majinthia was the Indian Ambassador to Nepal, a member of a great and wealthy family, and a Sikh. I already knew Surjit Singh, having met him in northern India just after the war, and we were friends.

Of course, he knew nothing of the King, and had probably seen no more of him than appearances at durbars. Also, Surjit was a diplomat, and a diplomat's duty is to treat with the powers that be, not those that might be. These things I had considered before I ultimately decided to make my appeal.

I chose an afternoon when I had been asked to take tea at the Indian Embassy. Surjit and I were alone for a moment and I said: "Surjit-ji, I have something terribly important to ask you in private."

He looked at me very carefully. "You need help?"

"Not for myself."

He took my arm and led me into a little drawing-room. We sat together on a sofa, he at one end, I at the other; and he leaned his tall body against the cushions and extended one arm gracefully along the back of the sofa. "We shan't be disturbed," he said. "What is it?"

"I want you to help the King."

He was silent for a moment, then said: "I think you'd better tell me what all this is about, and ask me questions afterwards."

ONCE I began I could not stop. How long I spoke to Surjit without interruption I do not know. He watched me attentively, his head leaning on his hand, and the sunlight falling on the wall behind him. I told him of the King's despair and frustration. I said that the stories about his lechery and debauchery were Rana lies, and that the King wished to be free to be a constitutional monarch.

"But what do you want me to do?" Surjit asked.

"I want you to let Pandit Nehru know."

Surjit said nothing for some seconds. Then he frowned. "But you are asking me to involve my government in something very serious. I believe you, but I have only your word to give the Pandit-ji."

"Meet the King yourself, Surjit," I said impulsively, and I began again to plead the King's cause.

Surjit put his hands together and clenched them, looking up at me as if he had resolved the doubts in his mind. "I can promise only to meet him, Erika," he said. "I cannot promise to take any official steps."

When I took this news to the King he embraced me, holding me so tightly in his arms that I could hear his

heart-beat. That evening was one of the happiest we had ever spent together at the Happy Cottage, and it did not occur to us to answer one important question—how was Surjit to meet the King?

Now that I became a conspirator I discovered that the King had been one for years. He was in contact with the anti-Rana forces within Nepal. His three sons—Mahendra, Himalaya and Basundhara—were aware of this and helped him where they could.

Although Crown Prince Mahendra's palace was in Katmandu, Himalaya and Basundhara lived outside the city, towards the foothills. With the permission of the Prime Minister, the King occasionally visited them, ostentatiously carrying his violin for an evening's entertainment. He would go in his beige Mercury, driving the car himself, with an armed Rana officer sitting beside him.

At the prince's palace the Rana would be left in an ante-room. The King entered his son's private chambers, changed into a disguise, passed through into the gardens, and then climbed over a wall for his secret appointments. He returned the same way, bathed and changed, collected his Rana escort and returned home.

I clapped my hands when the King told me this. "That is how you shall meet Surjit," I cried.

I went to Surjit the following morning, and explained the King's plan.

"You've been very clever, both of you," he said. "But when and where shall I meet him?"

I said that the King would ask for permission to visit one of his sons soon, and that the meeting must, therefore, take place near the prince's palace. I

REPENTANCE—3

To do it no more is the truest repentance.

Martin Luther

suggested Basundhara. Surjit said that he knew the road to Basundhara's palace and suggested a grove of trees as a possible meeting-place. "I shall wait there alone in my car," he said. "You tell me the day and the hour. But there is something you both must know. The meeting must take place very soon. I have been recalled to India and another ambassador will take my place."

I stared at him, and wanted to cry. He took my hand. "Cheer up, Erika. I shall do what I can for your King. . . ."

The evening for the rendezvous came at last. When I arrived at the Happy Cottage the King was waiting, his face tight with anxiety.

He was simply dressed in white, and when I saw his empty hands I said: "There is a German proverb, *Kleine Geschenke erhalten die Freundschaft*—Little presents keep friendships alive. Take Surjit a present."

He smiled and pointed to the violin-case on the chair. "Open it," he said.

Inside there was no violin but a magnificent *kukri*—a curved sword—with a beautifully carved hilt of ivory, and a jewelled scabbard inlaid with gold.

"That is my little present for Surjit," said the King.

Then he left. I went with him to the gate of the palace, carrying the violin-case beneath my arm. His Mercury was waiting, and in the front seat was a young Rana officer, a shining revolver holster strapped to his belt. He alighted, saluted perfunctorily, and held open the door. I gave the violin-case to the King, and he dropped it casually on the rear seat and drove away.

I went back to the palace. The queens, princesses and I sat in the cocktail room, scarcely able to talk. In less than two hours the King returned, coming upon us suddenly. He stood in the doorway, and his pale face was paler than ever I had seen it.

"He wasn't there," he said.

NEXT WEEK: I leave Nepal with a sensational plan to free the King

© Erika Leuchtag, 1958

Spare-time policemen

Continued from page 11

Corporation of the City of London, runs its own mess and canteen at its Cloak Lane headquarters and the members take part in organized social and sporting activities. New members are issued with a free uniform. Travelling expenses are paid; there is a boot allowance of 6d., and a refreshment grant of 2s. 3d. is paid for each four-hour duty.

Duties are rarely dull; occasionally they can be exasperating. Once Special Constable Patrick Tamplin, a thirty-three year old stores accountant, and his colleagues had been warned to look for a missing boy. "Behind Broad Street Station," he says, "we encountered a large gang of likely candidates. They were drinking from a large bottle of blackcurrant cordial and each of them carried a brand new mop-head." When asked where they had acquired the mop-heads the ringleader pointed across the road and told Tamplin: "There's plenty more."

As the other members of the patrol moved off to find the source of the mop-heads, Tamplin saw a man scramble over a nearby wall surrounding the foundations of a new building. "We made a dash for him and caught him as he came over, but he proved to be the caretaker who explained that he could only lock up the premises from the inside."

While Tamplin and his colleagues interrogated the caretaker the boys vanished. "I'm still wondering where the mop-heads came from," says Tamplin.

Special policemen carry their warrants at all times. Off-duty, Cooley was driving past the Elephant and Castle when a car shot past him and crossed the traffic lights at red. Cooley chased the car and stopped it at Camberwell Green.

"I reproached the driver for his reckless behaviour and warned him not to repeat it. He was very indignant, but calmed down appreciably when I showed my warrant."

A junior employee of his firm boasted to Tamplin that he had used a friend's driving licence. "I asked somebody to warn him not to talk about such unlawful activities to a part-time policeman," says Tamplin.

While in civilian clothes How came upon the scene of a traffic accident near his home. A regular policeman had taken charge and a special constable was redirecting the traffic.

"I saw that he badly needed help," says How. "I showed my warrant and offered assistance, which he was grateful to accept."

The City of London Special Constabulary was established in 1914, but the force owes its origin to the trained bands of volunteers formed to put down disturbances in the City in 1600, and to the contingents of special constables enlisted by various City companies in the nineteenth century.

Sergeant How, born at Highbury forty-five years ago, joined the force in 1950. His status as an amateur policeman affords him good-natured respect among his friends and business acquaintances. Once, while directing traffic, he was recognized by a motorist who had served with him in the army during the war. "He was astonished to find me in uniform," says How. "He complained that he had only just recovered from the shock of seeing me in battledress."

On night duties How likes to get away on time and snatch a few hours sleep before morning. "Ten minutes from the end of a duty," he says, "I never argue with anyone." Recently he was returning to his headquarters five minutes before the end of his duty at 1 a.m. when he was hailed by the caretaker of a block of business premises.

"I was caught," says How. "I couldn't ignore him. He was walking straight towards me, carrying a rimlock which was attached to a large fragment of broken door."

How investigated, but found that nothing had been stolen; the C.I.D. later decided that the intending burglar had been scared off by the noise made by the shattering of the door.

"It was half past two by the time I finished filling in reports." THE END

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"Mmm . . . not bad"

The racing rebel rides his hunches

Continued from page 13

winners to become champion for the first of four successive seasons.

In 1951 he had the chance to become the first man in British steeplechasing history to ride one hundred winners in a season. With two days of racing and seven rides to go, he had won ninety-eight times. Then he won again. But though he finished second five times in the remaining six races, he did not ride another winner. "It was one time when luck didn't come my way," he says.

Riding is more to Molony than just a means of earning a living. With his twenty-six year old wife Stella he hunts on most of the days he is not engaged for racing. He has given a pony to each of his three children: Patricia, aged ten, by his first wife who died in 1949; Will, aged four, and Marty, eighteen months.

On the racecourse he is noted as a great talker. He constantly urges his horse on, reviles other jockeys who get in his way, or challenges them to make a race of it. "You never know whether he means what he is saying, or is just pulling your leg," says Dick Francis, who for some seasons was one of Molony's chief rivals.

Once, after setting the pace for

three-quarters of a Mildmay 'Chase at Sandown Park, Molony shouted to Francis, who was immediately behind him: "You'd better take over—mine's tiring."

Francis took the lead round the final bend and raced up the straight, only to hear Molony shouting gleefully: "Here we go again," as he went ahead at the last jump.

Molony displays the same lack of inhibition in public. In a steeplechase at Leicester some years ago he and Glen Kelly, another jockey, had falls at a jump far away from the finishing post. Kelly, who had managed to hang on to the reins of his horse, invited Molony to climb up behind. The two of them cantered leisurely back past the stands, with Molony, to the delight of the crowd, waving his cap like a cowboy in a rodeo.

Another year, when he was guest of honour at the annual dinner for the champion jockey, he was seated next to Lord Willoughby de Broke, the senior National Hunt steward. After the formal speeches Molony decided that the proceedings needed livening up.

Without warning, he stood up, announced that he was going to baptize his lordship, and did so by pouring a glass of champagne over Lord Willoughby's head.

A guest summed it up at the time: "Molony has no great respect for convention." THE END

Percy Edwards spoofs the dawn chorus

Continued from page 17

said. When Edwards learned that she proposed to fit this sound to a herd of reindeer stampeding over a cliff he protested violently. "Reindeer could not make a noise like that at any time," he told her. "Stampeding over a cliff they would probably be silent."

"Cinema audiences are not so particular," he was told. In this film he also imitated wolves, huskies and eagles.

The wide variety of his work involves Edwards in a great deal of travelling. Once, when he had been appearing at the Winter Gardens, Morecambe, he had to travel back after the last show on Saturday night to be in London for a B.B.C. rehearsal on Sunday morning. Peter Sellers, the comedian, was returning in a chauffeur-driven hired car and offered to let Edwards share it. They set off and were soon asleep.

Sellers awoke to the sound of squealing tyres and a violent crash which threw him against the partition as the car rammed the bank at the side of the road, finishing up on its side.

As he clambered from the wreck, feeling for broken bones, Sellers noticed Edwards walking round with a glazed look in his eye, whistling like a bird.

"My first thought was that a crack on the head had made him ga-ga," says Sellers. "I rushed up and shook him by the shoulders and asked him if he

was all right. He thanked me politely and went on whistling. It turned out he had banged his jaw and just wanted to make sure that he could still warble."

Edwards, who was born in Ipswich, still lives in Suffolk, in the village of Trimley St. Mary. As a child he was "bird crazy." He remembers eating bird seed every night in the hope that he would sing like a canary in the morning.

He first broadcast more than twenty-five years ago from Savoy Hill. After a few years of comparative success he was forgotten. So for thirteen years he worked as an engineer in an agricultural machinery factory and studied bird life in his spare time. After the war his wife prompted him to get in touch with the B.B.C. again.

To prevent his imitations from becoming "rusty" Edwards practises anywhere and at any time when he feels people will not be too startled. One summer day he was travelling by a local train, which halted at a wayside station. On the window sill of a nearby cottage a black-and-white cat was basking in the sunshine. Edwards decided to liven it up. He gave a forceful imitation of an amorous tom-cat.

The cat didn't budge, but a moment later the door of the cottage opened and a buxom countrywoman started haranguing the cat, which jumped down and ran round behind the cottage with the woman chasing it.

Edwards settled back in his seat. "That cat should have moved," he said to himself. "I'll have to practise that one." THE END

Fastest man alive

by FRANK K. EVEREST
as told to John Guenther

In the eerie silence twelve miles above the earth I was blazing a trail into the unknown. My task—to gatecrash space



The United States Air Force chose Lieutenant-Colonel Everest to attack the world speed record—at altitudes never before attempted

I WENT to bed early after dinner, hoping to get a sound night's rest. The children were asleep and Avis, my wife, also retired early. Sensing my strain she refrained from talking after we turned the lights off and soon fell asleep.

Not so with me. I lay awake in the quiet house a long time, my thoughts on the coming flight, and my mind rehearsing over and over the plans for its execution.

Early in January, 1949, Colonel Albert Boyd, chief of the flight test division at Wright Field, Ohio, had called me to his office for an interview.

It concerned a rocket ship—the famous Bell X-1. This was the aircraft which Captain Charles Yeager had flown faster than sound in October, 1947, in man's first supersonic flight. Since that time Chuck and several other pilots, military and civilian, had broken the sound barrier in this aircraft.

In September, 1948, Air Force Secretary Symington stated publicly that it had flown several hundred miles faster than sound. Of course I knew about its performance and was well aware that the maximum speed for the original model had probably been reached. My only regret was that I had not yet had the opportunity to fly it.

But altitude records were another matter. And

that was why I was there in Colonel Boyd's office. The air force wanted to run altitude tests on the X-1, he told me, and asked if I cared to undertake this hazardous mission. If possible we hoped to break the existing world's altitude record, which was held by an army balloon at 72,000 feet.

More important, for the first time we could discover how a manned vehicle would behave at high speeds in the upper air. It was even possible that some day we could fly still higher, beyond the earth's atmosphere.

To me the opportunity was a challenge and I accepted without a moment's hesitation. I was almost speechless with excitement and anticipation. Colonel Boyd attempted to slow me down. He tried to impress upon me the importance of this programme, as well as the hazards.

I was told to go ahead and plan the tests. This meant a temporary assignment to Muroc Air Force Base, the X-1 test site in the California desert near Los Angeles. The oversize landing field on Rogers Lake at Muroc, more than fifteen miles of natural runways, was the safest place to make the deadstick landings required in the X-1.

I might well be gone several months, so I should plan on taking my family. Vicky was only two and Cindy, the baby, just a few months old,

but my wife thought that the desert would be a healthy place for children.

My first step was a visit to the aero-medical branch at Wright Field, where I learned to wear the new high-altitude pressure suit which Chuck Yeager pioneered in the X-1. This was still in the development stage and had not yet been tried out in a real emergency, as we had never experienced an explosive decompression in an aircraft at dangerous heights.

However, I would be flying above 63,000 feet, where my blood would boil if the cockpit pressure failed, and the pressure suit was one of those things I had to take along.

The suit was very uncomfortable, even though it was made to my own measurements. The tight-fitting garment constricted my movements and the tight laces impeded the circulation of blood in my arms and legs. Worse still, it was almost airtight, and when wearing it I sweated profusely, even in cold weather. I usually finished a test run several pounds below my take-off weight.

Although the suit was bad, the pressure helmet we wore at that time was even worse. It had to fit tightly to maintain an air seal and became quite painful after any length of time. I could stand it about an hour before the pressures created by the helmet and the suit would overcome me and I was ready to give up. When I had

His helmet painted with Indian feathers, Colonel Everest poses with the Bell X-2 research plane in which he reached a speed of 1,900 m.p.h.



After his mission Everest, who is thirty-seven, was posted to an office job. At a flying station in Germany he relaxes with his wife and family





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passed a thorough medical examination, I was given final approval to proceed with the altitude tests.

Early in March, after nearly two months of intensive preparations, I packed up my family and drove west.

The X-1, first aircraft in the world to exceed the speed of sound in level flight, was also America's first rocket-powered aircraft. The design of its engine, four rocket tubes mounted in a cluster, had never been used before in an aeroplane.

The fuel, a mixture of water alcohol and liquid oxygen, had never been employed in powered flight. Forced into the rocket chambers under very high pressure by nitrogen gas, their combustion produced a forward thrust of six thousand pounds. In the little X-1, which weighed only 6,200 pounds empty, this was enough to drive it 120,000 feet high at a maximum speed of nearly 1,400 miles an hour.

On March 21, 1949, I made my first flight in the X-1. I practised firing the rocket chambers, alternately and in sequence, feeling the blast of power behind me as the engine came to life.

Four days later on my second flight I went supersonic. It was on this flight that I experienced a rocket fire and automatic shutdown due to a leaking fuel valve.

We had agreed that, starting with my third flight, I would attempt to go for maximum altitude. But again we experienced engine trouble because I could get only two rocket chambers firing, and as a result I had to turn back at 60,000 feet. We had a lot of difficulty in those days starting the rocket chamber igniters which lighted the propellants.

ON this flight I was bothered by a head cold which caused a pressure on my eardrums. The X-1 was always lifted under the belly of a big B-29, from which it dropped in mid-air before starting flight under its own power.

After dropping from the B-29 and climbing to altitude, the pressure in my ears became very painful and the only way I could relieve it was to hold my nose and blow.

However, I was wearing an old-type pressure helmet with fixed visor which was impossible to open. Nor could I remove my helmet with its supply of life-saving oxygen, for the cockpit was filled with exhaust fumes from the nitrogen gas which operated some of the instruments.

There I was and that was the way I had to stay. It was only a matter of seconds before my eardrums broke, and, suffering considerable pain, after reaching maximum altitude I came back down and landed.

Medical examination revealed that damage was minor, as the rupture was small, and a week or two later, after the hole had healed over and become strong enough to withstand pressure, I resumed my test work in the X-1.

As a result of this accident I began carrying an extra helmet with me—the regular crash helmet I normally used in flying. Any time I had ear trouble I would rip off the pressure helmet, hold my nose and blow hard, thus relieving the pressure in my ears. Taking care not to inhale the nitrogen gas in the cockpit, I would hurriedly don the crash helmet, which I could plug into the X-1 oxygen system.

I was making my let-down on a subsequent flight when again my ears started to hurt. Without really thinking about what I was doing I ripped off the pressure helmet, blew my nose and put on my crash hat. To do this I had to let go of the wheel and use two hands, and in the meantime the X-1 rolled over on its back.

I was holding my breath, in a hurry to plug in my oxygen tube and also get the aeroplane right side up again. After two or three breaths I felt as though I was suffocating. I was aware of a prickling sensation in my arms and legs and I felt strange all over. My hands lost control and began to jerk about the cockpit and I could not hold my head up.

Thinking there must be something wrong with the oxygen system, I reached down and released the emergency oxygen supply fitted to my crash helmet. Eternities passed before my

fumbling fingers found the precious bail-out bottle. As my mask flooded with life-saving oxygen, I looked around the cockpit, and then I saw that I had plugged my breathing tube into the nitrogen exhaust outlet.

With trembling hands I pulled the tube out and plugged it in correctly. Then I came in and landed without further trouble.

But I was very shaken by the knowledge of my foolhardy mistake and for a long time did not mention it to anyone because I was ashamed to admit my error.

Two weeks elapsed before I flew the X-1 again. This was another attempt to reach maximum altitude. After dropping from the B-29 I started three rocket chambers and began climbing, when suddenly I felt and heard a sharp explosion in the rear of the aeroplane, and at the same time all three rocket chambers shut down.

I tried to move the rudder, but it was locked in position. I did not have a fire warning light in the cockpit, so I reported over the radio as calmly as I could that I had experienced another engine explosion and shutdown and was returning to base.

I glided back to the dry lake bed, jettisoning my remaining fuel as I came down from altitude, and flying with the rudder locked. At 30,000 feet my F-80 chase plane caught up with me. Dick Frost, who was chasing me that day, moved in close behind to take a look at the engine compartment, and in a moment he came on the air to report that my No. 1 rocket chamber had blown up. The rudder had been damaged by the explosion and would not move.

I landed without difficulty, using my brakes to maintain directional control, and came to a normal halt. Upon inspection of the aeroplane it was found that damage was considerable.

In July I made my fifth flight in the X-1. It was not too successful. And now, early in August, I was to take the X-1 up for the sixth time. At the pre-flight briefing the preceding afternoon we agreed on a dawn take-off for an assault on the world's altitude record. In the interval between darkness and daylight winds are calm over the quiet desert, creating the best conditions for rocket launching.

So, as I lay sleepless in bed, mentally I went over again each step in the flight plan, beginning with the take-off in the B-29. I was vividly aware of the many hazards and unknowns which lay before me. Lighting a fresh cigarette from the burning stub of another, I smoked and tossed as the hours passed, until long after midnight.

I had not been asleep very long when the alarm clock shrilled in the darkness, waking me suddenly from restless dreams.

Avis, too, awoke and called over to me. Shaking my head to clear away fatigue, I rose slowly to my feet and made myself ready for the coming day.

When I finished dressing Avis had breakfast waiting—a light meal of grapefruit, oatmeal and milk. I am not much of a breakfast man under any circumstances and hunger leaves me entirely in times of stress. Through the

CHALLENGE THE FAMOUS

IN his answers to the six questions on sport on page 22, Chris Brasher scored two and three-quarter points.

His answer to Question 1 was correct but he was wrong over Question 2. The penalty spot is twelve yards from the goal line. And he was slightly out in his answer to Question 3. The American Davis Cup player Lester Stoefen served at 131 m.p.h. in 1935.

He was almost right in his answer to the first half of Question 4—a stump should be twenty-eight inches above the ground—and right over the second half. He answered Question 5 correctly but tripped over Question 6. A hand is four inches.



shaded window to the east I could see the first slivers of morning breaking across the blackness of the desert sky. Breakfast over, I tiptoed into the nursery for a look at the sleeping children. Avis followed me on to the porch and, as she kissed me goodbye and told me to be careful, I was aware of a special urgency and concern in her voice. I winked at her and said, "No sweat."

When I reached the flight line the B-29 sat waiting in the semi-darkness. Chuck Yeager would fly chase plane for me today, and with him I again reviewed emergency procedures in the event of trouble. Bob Cardenas, the B-29 pilot, joined us and we discussed the familiar plan for climb and drop.

At seven thousand feet Major Cardenas indicated that it was time for me to enter the cockpit of the X-1. I put my helmet on once more, pulled on a pair of silk-lined leather gloves, and was helped into a wool-and-nylon flying suit over my pressure suit. Fully dressed I entered the bomb bay and stepped aboard the one-man elevator that lowered me to the opening in the side of the rocket plane.

The slipstream was buffeting me and the bomber's four 3,500-horsepower engines were howling in my ears. If the elevator broke there was nothing between me and the ground—not even a parachute. Feeling trapped and nervous, I struggled through the small door into the X-1 cockpit and slipped sideways into my seat.

Squirming in the cramped cockpit to settle myself into the most comfortable position, I plugged in my oxygen mask and bail-out bottle and connected my headset and microphone to the X-1's radio cord. Major Cardenas and I exchanged a few words to test my radio communications. As they appeared satisfactory, I told Jack Ridley, the co-pilot, that I was ready to seal the cockpit.

As he pulled the little aluminium elevator up into the mother ship I was left completely isolated in my cubicle.

I busied myself with the long list of controls and instruments to be checked before my flight. Although it would be nearly forty-five minutes before we reached drop altitude at 30,000 feet, there was still plenty of work to be done. Behind me in the X-1 the white vapour trailing off behind the aeroplane marked the liquid oxygen constantly boiling away as the B-29 continued its climb.

A last look around the cockpit, a last check of my pressure and oxygen outlets, and I reached forward with my right hand and switched on the launch-ready light. Then it was only ten seconds to drop, and over the intercom Major Cardenas began his countdown in a loud and clear voice:

"Ten—nine—eight—seven—six—five—four—three—two—one—DROP!"

I was tense as I dropped from the shadowed belly of the B-29. The X-1 fell like a stone earthward. My fingers moved instinctively over and closed on the toggle switches to fire the rocket chambers in the silent plane.

Quickly I depressed the switches in rapid succession. As if a monster sledgehammer had struck the cockpit behind

me, I was forced back in my seat as three chambers ignited in a blast of deafening power. I gasped for breath in my deflated lungs while my hands slowly pulled the control wheel back toward my chest and the nose of the X-1 pointed skyward.

Now the B-29 was behind and far below me as the fiery furnace of burning propellants hurled me upward. Catching my breath at last, I spoke with effort over the radio. "Three chambers firing," I said deliberately, maintaining a calm and even voice so that I could be understood by the listeners on the ground. Still climbing with me but rapidly falling behind, Chuck Yeager in the F-80 chase plane came on the air to confirm my engine start. "Everything looks fine from here," he assured me.

A glance showed me that my altitude was already 45,000 feet.

Now, ever so slightly, ever so carefully, I pushed forward on the wheel to nose over into level flight. Speed now was nine-tenths of the speed of sound. The upward rush of the aeroplane continued and accelerated as it passed 50,000 feet.

Between Mach .9 and Mach 1 I again felt the aircraft buffet moderately to severely as the shock waves increased. Then the buffet suddenly slackened and the hurtling aeroplane, grown suddenly silent as noise itself was outdistanced, lunged irresistibly beyond the speed of sound. The altimeter stood at 55,000 feet. I pointed the nose of the X-1 skyward again and switched on the fourth rocket chamber.

SOUND could not tell me that it did not start, for all sound was behind me. Only from the blank eye on the chamber pressure gauge, a dot of emptiness in the shadowy cockpit, did I know that the fourth chamber was not firing.

The thrust of the rocket engine was now almost as great as the weight of the aeroplane as I rushed upward in a nearly vertical climb. Then I felt the sudden decrease in forward thrust as the operating rocket chambers, their fuel supply exhausted, abruptly burned themselves out and shut down.

There was a sharp de-acceleration and I was pushed up in my shoulder harness tight against the straps. Speed was Mach 1.3 and altitude over 65,000 feet. Hurled skyward by the vast momentum of its climb, though without any internal power to support it, the X-1 still flashed upward in super-sonic flight.

At rocket burnout I glanced outside the cockpit for the first time. My feeling was one of eerie loneliness in the silent little plane. Glancing up at the sky toward which it still carried me with unbelievable force, I saw a dome of deep, dark purple, unlike any colour I had ever known on the ground. Far, far below me was the earth I lived on, flat and featureless, except at the horizon, where I could see the curve of the globe itself.

Still climbing, the aeroplane suddenly began to buffet and I knew that it was near stall. I estimated my altitude at over 70,000 feet. I attempted to keep the nose pointed upward, but the aeroplane reacted like a ballistic missile as its remaining momentum began to spend



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itself. At the top of the long arc that would lead me earthward the X-1 paused momentarily, shuddered like a spent bird, then settled downward. The nose dropped slowly down to level flight. Flying the aircraft once more I pushed the X-1 over in a steep dive.

Around 30,000 feet Chuck Yeager gave me my heading over the radio. We let down together toward the dry lake bed. I had a dead engine, but at five thousand feet I peeled off and lowered the landing gear in the little aeroplane and I was home.

We never claimed the world's altitude record officially, because the instruments we had for measuring altitude in those days were not very accurate. However, we still were confident that we had surpassed the previous record of 72,000 feet by at least one thousand feet.

On August 25 I took the X-1 up on my seventh flight for another attempt to reach maximum altitude above 73,000 feet. At seven thousand feet I left the bomb bay of the B-29 and went down on the little aluminium elevator into the cockpit of the X-1. I saw a small crack in the canopy along the edge.

It was a tiny break only an inch long, and as it appeared to be confined to the inner shell of the Plexiglass canopy, I did not feel it important enough to call off the flight.

The drop and rocket start were clean and quick. Chuck Yeager and Kit Murray were behind me in F-80 chase planes and confirmed that my engine was going. In seconds I passed through the buffet region, levelled off and went supersonic and pulled up again and continued my climb.

Suddenly I heard a loud "poof" in the cockpit and my pressure suit inflated instantaneously. In a flash I realized that I had lost my cockpit pressure. Glancing up at the canopy I saw with a start that the one-inch crack had extended back six or eight inches, then turned left and broken completely through.

Momentarily stunned, I hesitated for a fraction of a second. Altitude was 65,000 feet. I was acutely aware that the low pressure in rarified air at this altitude would boil my blood like water if my pressure suit failed. Then, moving abruptly to regain command of the situation, I cut my engine and in the same motion shoved the control column all the way forward and nosed over sharply in a steep dive.

At 20,000 feet, in human air once more and breathing normally again, I relaxed for the first time. With my left hand I opened the valve that released the pressure in my suit.

"Everything's okay," I called over the radio. "The canopy broke and I had to come down in a hurry." The untried pressure suit was the only thing that had saved my life.

In 1951, about the time I became chief of flight test operations, new planes began arriving to undertake various research programmes.

Fires of unknown origin destroyed the first two aircraft and held up work on the remaining two. As a result it was December of 1953 before Chuck Yeager was able to fly the X-1A to a new record of Mach 2.42, nearly two and a half times the speed of sound.

And it was May, 1954, before Major Kit Murray flew the same aeroplane to an altitude record of 90,000 feet. I was selected to take the X-1D up and see what it could do wide open. After take-off I sat around chatting with Major Jack Ridley, the co-pilot of the bomber, and Wendell Moore, the Bell rocket expert, while the B-50 mother ship climbed in the familiar slow spiral, straining for altitude with eight tons of X-1 in its belly. At ten thousand feet I climbed down through the bomb bay and entered the rocket ship to begin my cockpit check.

I noticed immediately that the X-1 was losing the nitrogen source pressure required to actuate its various pressure systems. We would have to abort the flight, and jettison the water alcohol and liquid oxygen. Moore got down behind me on the edge of the bomb bay and looked over my shoulder. Standing on the seat in the X-1 cockpit I steadied myself with my left hand on the edge

A PROBLEM FOR PERCY THROWER

Mystery powder on Eric Robinson's roses



ERIC ROBINSON, the TV conductor, has more than two hundred rose bushes in his garden overlooking Primrose Hill, in north London. "This year," he says, "I intend to experiment on six of the bushes with a foliage-feeding powder my manager brought from America. Incidentally I find that it is best to prune roses hard, especially in London where the soil is not too good. Does Percy Thrower agree with this?"

PERCY THROWER says:

Hard pruning does no harm if the soil is not conducive to strong growth; otherwise I prefer average pruning. A safe rule is to cut back last year's branches on hybrid teas to within four or five buds of where growth began, and to allow floribundas an extra bud or two. Make cuts preferably above a prominent bud pointing out from the centre of the bush.

Foliage feeding is not new. I sprayed cyclamen and other pot plants with a weak solution of soot water years ago, and this was always beneficial. Eric Robinson's American powder is not yet on sale in Britain, and I cannot vouch for its results. There will be a new tablet or liquid sold this spring—giberellic acid, which

promotes tall growth in such things as french beans. I wouldn't recommend it for roses.

The orthodox way to feed roses is to sprinkle a handful of fertilizer round each bush. You can make one up yourself using three parts superphosphate, two parts hoof and horn meal and one part sulphate of potash.

The fungus disease black spot was rampant last year. Spray bushes now, before pruning, with colloidal copper, burn dead leaves along with the prunings, skim off half an inch of soil, fork in two ounces of rose fertilizer round each bush, then mulch an inch deep with peat or manure to seal in any of the surviving spores. Use the spray again in June or July.

of the cockpit, while with my right hand I reached down and turned the valve that pressurized the liquid oxygen tank.

As I did so a deafening blast shook the X-1 and nearly knocked me down. Startled and momentarily numbed by the shock, I straightened up in the cockpit and looked around. To my dismay I saw a stream of fire from the top of the rocket ship pouring into the bomb bay of the B-50.

Nobody said anything. Ridley instinctively went for the emergency drop handle in the bomb bay to jettison the X-1 before its fuel exploded. At the same instant I vaulted clear of the plane in one leap into the bomber. I went sailing right over the top of Moore, who was still crouched in the opening, and squarely against Ridley, who had seized the emergency handle to drop the X-1.

The force of my mad exit knocked him forward into the cockpit of the B-50—luckily for us all, because the locking pins in the bomb shackles had

REPENTANCE—4

Late repentance is seldom true, but true repentance is never too late.

R. Venning

not been removed. Had he pulled the emergency drop handle, the burning plane would have fallen on the locking pins and jammed.

As the first blast blew off the landing-gear doors, the landing gear dropped from the wheel walls and the doors fell toward the ground. Ridley and I jumped to our feet and I yelled at him to jettison the aircraft. Reaching forward in the B-50 cockpit he grasped the normal drop lever and pulled it hard with both hands. As he did so the bomb shackles snapped open and the burning X-1 with its load of explosive propellants plummeted earthward.

As a result of this disaster and the subsequent fire that destroyed the X-1 No. 3 in November, 1951, the next X-1 test programme was set back two years.

In the summer of 1953 we began

again, and several times got the X-1A up to Mach 2—twice the speed of sound. In December, when Chuck Yeager took it up to see what it would do wide open, he touched Mach 2.42, ran out of control, and his aeroplane tumbled through the stratosphere at terrible speeds. Chuck regained command but only after he had been badly beaten up.

All next year we experimented with controlling the aircraft at high speeds, and gradually gained experience. What we learned would help meet the greater challenge of the Bell X-2, which would soon fly under its own power for the first time.

The X-2 was a forty-foot pressure vessel with the world's first throttleable rocket engine, permitting the pilot to increase or decrease his speed without shutting power off. It had wings of stainless steel and a fuselage of K-monel metal, an alloy of copper and nickel. These metals could withstand temperatures of 750 degrees Fahrenheit which the X-2 was expected to meet.

For fuel it burned water alcohol and liquid oxygen which boiled at a temperature three hundred degrees below zero—creating a temperature differential at maximum speed of one thousand degrees between the inner and outer surfaces of the aircraft.

I am a small man, five feet seven inches tall and weighing 150 pounds, but even for me the X-2 cockpit was a very tight fit. I sat on the floor with the stick between my legs and my shoulders brushing the sides of the cockpit. Fully dressed, with my parachute on, my helmet touched the top of the canopy, while I had to bend my legs to get my feet on the rudder bar.

In July, 1956, I was to be transferred to a desk job. So the ninth powered flight of the X-2 was to be my last mission in that aeroplane. On previous flights it had suffered from trouble with the landing gear, and then with its engine. On the ninth flight I was planning to approach Mach 3. This would be faster than man had ever flown.

It was 5 a.m. when the alarm clock roused me from my sleep at the first light of morning.

For breakfast I had an egg and a piece of toast. I was not hungry and couldn't eat more. After breakfast I

went in to see the children but they were still asleep. Avis came out on the porch with me and I kissed her good-bye. "Wish me luck," I said. Both of us were a little tense. She clung to me a moment, then straightened up and smiled. "I wish you all the luck and love in the world," she said.

At 6.45 Jimmy Powell called the B-50 crew to board the aircraft and activity began to increase. I zipped up my pressure suit and put on my heavy flying suit over it. One last handshake with the men remaining behind, and I got in the B-50 and went forward to the nose to the bombardier's position, which I usually occupied during take-off.

After gear and flaps came up I went back in the B-50 and sat down near the X-2 control panel with Bill Fleming, the Bell panel engineer. Captain Wray helped me adjust my pressure helmet and strapped it down. Then he connected up my bail-out bottle to the pressure suit and strapped on my parachute.

Sunlight was now flooding the B-50 and the X-2 as we climbed laboriously upward, circling slowly in a heavy spiral that would take us to drop altitude, about six miles above the ground.

At 33,000 feet the B-50 would not go any higher. Captain Fulton nosed over to pick up speed for the drop and his dive carried him 2,800 feet toward the ground. At 7.45 a.m. he tripped the lever that released the bomb shackles in the big bomber and the X-2 fell free in the morning light.

My gloved fingers depressed the locking button on the throttle as I fell. With a force that slammed me back against the cockpit wall, the rocket chambers roared into life. Shaking my head to clear it from the shock of the sudden acceleration, I pulled the wheel slowly back toward my pounding heart and began the familiar climb upward.

My senses were extremely acute and drawn to one point in time, waiting for the unknown to happen. In my hands I held the reins of 80,000 horses.

Level now. The aeroplane accelerated on up and I watched the machmeter climb to a speed I knew had never before been flown by man. I observed some debris coming over the nose of the plane and hitting the windshield. Paint was blistering from the fuselage and coming back over the cockpit. This was the heat barrier. Speed was now over 1,900 miles an hour.

Except for the hiss of air over the cockpit and the far off crackle of static over my radio headset, I heard nothing. An occasional clicking whispered in my ears as the electrical instruments fed their invisible energy through the headset. Otherwise there was perfect silence and I had a suspended feeling of being alone in time and space and away from all things living.

I moved the stick very gently, just an inch or two sideways, then returned it immediately to neutral to observe the reaction of the aeroplane. It was still controllable and I felt that it could be flown safely at these speeds or a little faster.

When I finally broke radio silence I said one word: "Bingo!"

To the listeners many miles below me, it said what they were waiting to hear. This was it—this time we had done it. When my chase pilots picked me up I did a few victory rolls in my wonderful feeling of exuberance and achievement.

Cindy and Vicky were at school when I got home, but five-year-old Kendall was in the yard digging a slit trench. Avis ran out to the driveway as I jumped from the car and hugged and kissed me.

Over the luncheon table I still talked about the flight that morning and she tried to appear interested. But I knew that her heart wasn't in it, and after a while I began talking about other things. Besides, the movers were coming tomorrow and I had to help her to do the packing.

THE END

Frank K. Everest's story is being published as a book, "The Fastest Man Alive," on May 22 by Cassells at 21s.

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